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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

RUTH ROUSE
AND
H. CRICHTON MILLER, M.D.

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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PHENOMENON OF AUTOSUGGESTION

BY

RUTH ROUSE

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FOREWORD

THIS book was written before the war, and it had been our purpose to revise it before publication. Since the war began, however, we have never been in England at the same time, except for a few weeks; one of us has been on active service, and ever since his return the other has been abroad continuously. It is not the length of the war, with its preoccupations, which has determined us to relinquish our purpose of delay until joint revision became possible, but the urgent desire of the Student Christian Movement that what we have prepared should be made available at once. The difficulty as to the relation of autosuggestion to Christian Experience is one, they tell us, which is much to the fore in the colleges and elsewhere just now and in urgent need of treatment. We yield to the Student Movement's knowledge of the situation and their desire for immediate publication, and send the book forth in the earnest hope that it may be of help to some who are struggling with a complicated question. Our warmest thanks are due to Professor Raoul Allier

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of the Sorbonne, Professor Henri Bois of Montauban, Mr T. R. Glover of Cambridge, Professor D. S. Cairns of Aberdeen, and many other friends, who have helped us generously with criticism and suggestion. We would also acknowledge gratefully the work of Miss Rena Carswell, Miss Ida Southall, and Miss F. G. Sutton, each of whom has helped us in secretarial work, but in no mere secretarial spirit.

R. R.
H. C. M.

June 1917

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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

I

STATEMENT OF THE DIFFICULTY

THE battle ground between faith and unbelief is perpetually shifting. An era of unprecedented discovery and consequent interest in the realm of the natural sciences led to an attempt to explain all phenomena, physical or mental, in terms of matter, to *an attack in terms of matter.* Science has discovered in all its recent advances that life reacts more and more to stimulus according to law, and the business of science has been largely to establish those laws whereby it has been possible to predict and calculate the effect of a given stimulus upon animal or vegetable tissue, or upon the living animal or vegetable, as the case might be. This reaction to stimulus was looked upon as a mere epiphenomenon in the life of living nerve tissue, and in order to maintain his hypothesis that all conduct and behaviour can ultimately be reduced to scientific laws, the scientist has, ever

since the days of Huxley, sternly refused to give any place in his scheme of life to a free, unfettered and incalculable human will. Religion was, therefore, ruled out of court as a necessary sequel to this elimination of free will. The scientific biologist of the Victorian period argued that a man is depressed because the biliary secretion is out of gear; he is amorous because of the activity of certain endocritic glands; energetic because of the state of his cerebral arteries, or sleepy because of the inadequacy of his thyroid secretion. Therefore, said the biologist, as I have proved the influence of matter upon mind in certain directions and in certain degrees, it follows that all mental activities are subordinate to physical conditions.

The fight on that ground is not yet over, but the biologist of to-day knows too much to maintain a thesis such as that which we have just expressed. He realises that the mind shows its domination over matter in certain incontrovertible ways, and since that is so, he has been bound to admit that there can be no refutation of religious phenomena upon purely materialistic lines, but that such refutation must take place, if at all, on lines of pure psychology. The scene of battle has largely shifted, and faith is called upon to defend itself against an *attack in terms of mind*. Men are swinging round to a spiritualistic philosophy, as may be easily seen

from the eager and popular interest shown in the philosophies of Bergson and Eucken. The phenomena of religion are recognised everywhere as a great, if not the greatest, factor in producing civilisation: there is a widespread interest in psychic phenomena of all sorts: a vast number of more or less spiritual cults hold the field even amongst those who have given up Christianity. "New Thought" and "Higher Thought" attract many votaries. So, also, do various more or less oriental cults, Theosophy, Bahaism, and Esoteric Buddhism. A study of psychology is pretty general, if not very profound, among educated people.

The result is a surging up of objections to the Christian faith, expressed in terms of psychology. As Flournoy says:—

> Le conflit entre le christianisme et la science a éclaté d'abord sur le terrain cosmologique: la lutte s'est transportée ensuite sur le terrain de la biologie: elle se trouve maintenant sur celui de la psychologie.[1]

This conflict centres round a rigid examination of Christian experience. In all ages of Christian history when called upon for apologetic, Christians have been wont to make much of their experience—experience of forgiveness, deliverance from

[1] Theodore Flournoy, "Unpublished Lecture."

sin, peace, joy, communion with God, etc. This citadel of Christian apologetic has been always under fire. The weapons directed against it used to be the charges of imposture or delusion. To-day the charge is that Christian experience is the product of autosuggestion or self-hypnotism of the individual, the product of mob psychology in the crowd.

Let us study the questions at issue, as formulated by friend or foe. Professor Lake expresses the issue as follows :—

> The really serious controversy of the future will be concerned with the question, " What is religion ? " and the opposing propositions will be (1) that religion is the communion of man in the sphere of subliminal consciousness with some other being higher than himself, (2) that it is the communion of man with his own subliminal consciousness, which he does not recognise as his own, but hypostasises as someone exterior to himself.[1]

Professor Leuba, though writing from the opposite standpoint, sums up the controversy somewhat similarly :—

> The danger from historical and literary criticism is forgotten in the presence of psychological questions : Are communion with God, conversion, mystic revelation, etc., to be explained entirely

[1] Kersopp Lake, "The Earlier Epistles of St Paul," Rivingtons, 1914, pp. 251, 252.

according to natural psychological laws? If the answer be yes, how then legitimise belief in a personal God supposed to produce these results in answer to petitions or to desires? If, on the other hand, there remains an unexplained residue after science has completed its work, what is the nature of this, and what can be drawn therefrom in behalf of faith? [1]

Emile Boutroux writes:—

> What is at bottom that special experience known as religious experience? Is it only a purely subjective condition, or is it an effective communication with some being different or distinct from the conscious subject. . . . Certainly, for the individual who feels, believes and lives his faith, his feeling, his life, have an undeniable reality. But, on what are these beliefs and this life based? Is it on realities or on suggestions and autosuggestions of a purely psychological or physical origin? Have they a real or a merely imaginary value? ∎

Feuerbach believes the gods to be the children of man's thirst for happiness.

> The instinct from which religion arises is the instinct for happiness. Man believes in God not only because he has imagination and feeling, but also because he has the instinct for happiness. He believes in a blessed being not only because he has a conception of blessedness, but because he himself would be blessed; he believes in a

[1] James H. Leuba, "A Psychological Study of Religion," The Macmillan Co., New York, 1912, p. 212.

∎ "Foi et Vie," December 16th, 1905.

perfect being because he himself wishes to be perfect ; he believes in an immortal being because he himself desires immortality. . . . If a man had no desires, then he would have, in spite of imagination and feeling, no religion, no God.[1]

Professor Leuba, when developing the psychological explanation of the origin of religions, says :—

> One of the most useful propensities of man is to ascribe to unseen beings, without strict regard to their original nature, the ability to supply all the wants of the tribe and the individual. . . . It is truly a remarkable habit—that of imagining in other beings coveted powers and virtues, and of turning these powers, by supplications and offerings, to one's own benefit, or of enriching oneself with these virtues by means of sympathetic communion. . . . We see in others perfections which we lack.[2]

And once more :—

> In the stress of his moral need, man learns to look upon his god as the personification of his ideal and the purveyor of moral energy. In God he sees realised that after which he yearns, the perfect, which is not to be found on earth.
>
> The history of the development of gods is a magnificent testimony to the strength of man's craving for power and perfection, and to his ingenuity in gratifying his wants. He has endowed his gods according to his needs ; and he has believed in them and communed with them, because in these ways he has been brought

[1] Ludwig Feuerbach, "Werke," Bd. VIII., pp. 257-258.
[2] "A Psychological Study of Religion," p. 112.

nearer to the realisation of his desires. The psychological study of contemporary religious experience makes it evident that the God of Christianity continues to be an object of worship not because his existence is rationally established, but because he affords ethical support and effective comfort.[1]

Other psychologists again appear dissatisfied with the autosuggestion hypothesis, and throw all the weight of their attack on the validity of Christian experience, into the charge of mob psychology or suggestion of the crowd when in a hypnoidal state. An eminent French psychologist writes :—

> What plays the principal part in influencing opinions and beliefs, religious or otherwise, is not suggestion but receptivity and hypnotism. If a suggestion be made to a man who is absolutely awake, he will, if gifted with a normal critical sense, argue about it. If he accepts it and submits to it, it will be through reasoning and of his own free will. It can be said then that in such a case there is no suggestion, since suggestion implies the domination of an idea imposed by force, with authority and in an imperative manner.
>
> Therefore as soon as there is an argument there is no suggestion.
>
> Suggestion will only be real under hypnotism. This state may be very light, brought on by overstrain of the attention or by prolonged

[1] "A Psychological Study of Religion," p. 201.

waiting or expectation, by timidity, by admiration, and also by preliminary preparations. Pomp, ceremonies, ritual, prayers, acts of faith, hymns, monotonous chanting, faith, all create the state of hypnosis. It is produced in the subject without his knowledge. Being hypnotised, being in these peculiar states known as hypnoidal, suggestion dominates them. These conditions are easy to produce in children, young people, women and emotional subjects.

Christianity has been propagated by means of suggestion in subjects previously hypnotised by the means quoted above. Every religion has recourse to these preliminaries by suggestion. To accentuate and facilitate hypnotism fasting has been added as a powerful adjunct.

The principles of Christianity once sown in our childhood are difficult to eradicate. They reassert themselves in crises, in the hour of danger and during illness. In order to propagate religious principles one must get hold of youthful minds, easy to influence, predisposed to hypnotism, by preliminary methods. People who have not been hypnotised, who have not gone through this experience are not influenced by suggestion. It has no power over them, and they throw it off very easily. Men gathered together in a crowd become hypnotised by that mere fact, and therefore sermons have more effect upon a group of people who have been hypnotised by prayer and ceremonies.

These things are in the air. Their influence is felt among the crowd: they are reproduced in unscientific language by many people, to whom a

scientific statement of the difficulty would be meaningless. The popular form of the charge brought by the would-be sceptic is often a contemptuous attribution of Christian experience to "hysteria." The popular form of the difficulty raised by the puzzled would-be believer is, "Am I not, by wishing so much to believe, making myself believe it?" "Am I not, in having certain Christian experiences, exactly like the man who kicks a football against a wall and feels it rebound against himself?" But whether expressed in scientific or in popular language, one thought is dominating the modern attitude towards religious experience, namely, the conception that there is, *in man himself*, considered individually or in the race, an inherent power to raise himself—that his best, and his attainment of it, are due to some richness in himself: that the deepest and holiest parts of his experience require no other factor to explain them than may be found in himself alone. "God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man."

The fundamental point at issue is whether or no the creative activity of God is required to account for the religious experience of man, either the historical development of his religious experience through the ages, or the religious experience of the individual.

The consequences are far-reaching. The enemies of Christianity, claiming in the name of psychology that there is no objective reality corresponding to Christian experience, boldly demand that the friends of faith shall clear all reference to the facts of Christian experience out of their apologetic armoury. Christians, while not prepared perhaps to grant this demand, begin to use the apologetic of Christian experience with hesitation. A weapon, the usefulness of which is doubted, can no longer be relied on with confidence and is bound to be cast away sooner or later. Are we justified in thus seriously depleting our arsenal?

But the autosuggestion attack on the reality of Christian experience will not affect apologetic only—it will also, in the long run, affect personal faith. Doubt cast on the reality of Christian experience as a weapon in outward apologetic will deprive it of value also in that inward and personal apologetic, which becomes necessary in the ups and downs of Christian life. Why should I use to fortify my own faith that which I cannot use to defend the faith to another? And Christian joy and trust disappear in a morass of self-analysis.

It is thus a crucial point for the Christian whether his experience is of human origin alone, or whether its development is due, in part at least, to the creative activity of God. It touches his effective-

ness in apologetics, his confidence in missionary efforts, and finally his personal faith. It is well worth his while, therefore, to examine the auto-suggestion theory of the origin of Christian experience.

II

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE proceeding to consider the psychological explanation of Christian experience, let us clear the ground on one or two points, which, if left vague, will confuse the whole issue.

1. *The difficulty is not new.* It is an old difficulty served up " à la mode psychologique." It is no new charge against Christianity that it is " merely subjective," no new difficulty about prayer that its results may be " merely subjective." Hence no completely new line of apology is needed, even could it be found, but both must be translated into the psychological language of to-day, and examined from the standpoint of modern psychological discoveries.

2. *Religion has no reason to hide from this attack.* It should rather welcome it, for it necessitates a concentration of the attention of friend and foe alike on the facts of religious experience, that is, from our point of view, on the present-day action of God in the world. Christianity has everything to gain from the study of such facts, for whether men

consider them valid as evidence or not, these facts will prove their own evidential power. Religious leaders have never feared the study of religious psychology, and much of the pioneer work of religious psychology has been done by believing men, *e.g.* Inge, Starr, Coe, Rufus Jones and others. William James himself remained entirely sympathetic with the religious leaders of his day. Such men have shown no fear lest their researches should eliminate the action of God in the formation of Christian experience.

Again, it is well to note the fact that by no means all anti-Christian psychologists take the line that autosuggestion is a sufficient explanation of religious experience. The Danish psychologist, Harold Höffding, for example, though well known as an opponent of Christianity, says in his "Psychology of Religion":—

> The thesis that all theology is psychology cannot be scientifically proved. One cannot quite agree with Feuerbach when he makes the wish act as the theogonical principle, forming conceptions of God out of itself and only out of itself.

He nowhere asserts that religious experiences have their source in the individual who experiences them alone.

3. Do our opponents admit the practical value of Christian faith?

There is only one class of opponent with whom it is worth while to argue on this whole subject, that is the one who admits the practical value of Christianity.

As Professor Raoul Allier said in his introduction to his lectures on "Autosuggestion and Christianity" given in Paris in the spring of 1913 :—

> Before directly attacking the question of autosuggestion, we must settle the preliminary question, Is it conceded that the Christian faith is a source of higher life? Is it admitted that faith in communion with the divine, in superhuman help, in grace, lifts a man above himself and makes him capable of what he would certainly have been incapable in his own strength alone? If this preliminary question is answered in the negative there is no use continuing the discussion. If the "religious state" is not a superior state from the point of view of morals, what matter how it is explained? It is of no intrinsic interest. But if it transforms an insignificant individual, if it gives a man's life a new direction, then it is important to examine this phenomenon and to enquire why it produces such beneficent and extraordinary results. In that case it is easy to understand why the enemies of Christianity are anxious to explain these results without recourse to the hypothesis of divine help, and why they try to account for them on the hypothesis of autosuggestion. It seems to me extremely important to come to an understanding as to where the discussion is to begin. Without this precaution the debate will go round in a circle and arrive nowhere. After we have

animadverted at length on the question of autosuggestion, our opponent will turn back to the practical value of Christianity and will cast doubt on it. This line of retreat must be cut off in advance, though, of course, we must frankly admit to them that even when the practical value of Christianity is admitted, the problem of autosuggestion is not thereby settled and must be discussed in its entirety with complete freedom.

4. *Are the upholders of the autosuggestion theory prepared to attribute to the action of autosuggestion all emotional experience and all beliefs with which any element of emotion is connected?* And if they attribute such emotional experiences to autosuggestion are they prepared to take the same depreciatory line with regard to them that they do with regard to Christian experience?

What about the artistic emotions, for example? In the production of the pleasure given by both music and the fine arts, suggestion and autosuggestion play a considerable part. Few of us have arrived at our keen enjoyment of some one school of painting save as its excellencies have been revealed to us through the eyes of others, and *their* interpretation of what they saw. But are our artistic emotions for this reason to be discounted, and treated as if there were no reality behind them?

What again about other emotions, faith in one's

country, for example, that is, patriotism. It is obvious of course that suggestion plays a considerable part in arousing patriotic enthusiasm. Is there for this reason no validity in the patriotic emotion?

Still more vital is the question of faith in righteousness. Is belief in goodness any less the result of autosuggestion than belief in God? Is belief in goodness to be jettisoned because it has been generated by means of suggestion? Are we to cease to strive after higher moral standards because those standards have become ours by means of suggestion?

It is impossible to isolate religious experience from all other experience and explain it away on psychological grounds, without explaining away other classes of experience in the same way. To isolate religious psychology, and to insist on judging its operations by different standards than those we apply to psychology in general, is to knock the bottom out of psychology altogether.

5. *Furthermore, does not the theory of human knowledge implied in the autosuggestion theory make certainty about anything whatever in this world impossible*? Would it not, if consistently applied, reduce the world to an "insane sandheap"? Is it not closely akin to Solipsism?

If Christian belief is asserted to be the result of

autosuggestion, the same assertion may surely be made on exactly the same grounds about every other position, philosophical, religious or anti-religious, which any one can take up.

What are you doing, if you doubt your perceptions, whether in the religious or in the sense world? You are setting up a doubting self against your perceiving self. Your doubting self, as it were, watches your perceiving self and notices how many mistakes the perceiving self is making. But such a position is absolutely impossible. The doubting self which would possess such an absolute power of finding truth and of criticising the operations of perception is a pure creation of the fancy. Your doubting self is after all only your ordinary self in another temper, and because it doubts it does not really make itself any cleverer. Your doubting self, when it attempted to criticise the process of perception, would be likely to make exactly as many mistakes in its work of criticism as the perceiving self makes in its work of perception. In other words, the whole attitude is an attempt to get outside yourself, which is, of course, impossible, and based on the theory that if you could get outside yourself you would be infallible, and that is not proved.

Your modern psychological sceptic has a ready solution for this difficulty. He maintains concur-

rently two points of view; the one is the practical, the other is the philosophic point of view; he admits that they cannot be reconciled, and at the same time he maintains that neither is incorrect. For instance, he upholds in argument, with the utmost tenacity, that man has no free will; and immediately thereafter he punishes his child for being disobedient, which can only be justified on the assumption that he believes his own son to have free will. In the same way, the philosophic sceptic to-day fights for his country with no less zeal or courage because he admits that the driving emotion of patriotism is one which was instilled into him as a child by the suggestion of parents or teachers, and is not an independent product of his own mental life. It becomes necessary, therefore, to warn the reader that a great deal of what is written on the validity or otherwise of Christianity is of the nature of purely theoretical philosophy that would find its practical negation no further away than in the life of the writer himself. The philosophic pedant at his desk is not necessarily nearer to ultimate truth than the more practical and naive human being who is his exact counterpart outside the four walls of his study.

III

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITERION OF VALID EXPERIENCE

A (*i.*) The Scope and Limits of Psychological Criticism

Psychology has only recently claimed a place in science. Let us see what it can claim—what it has done and may achieve. First of all, when psychology claims to be a science what does it mean? What constitutes a science? What is the scientific method? Science is, in any department, and on a given plane, the collecting of human experience, the resumption of that experience, and thereafter the formulation of laws that enable us to predict future human experience. If psychology is a science, then it does this and this only, it restricts itself to the field of behaviour, and in the case of human psychology, to human behaviour. On that field it collects experience, resumes it, and endeavours to formulate laws that will enable us to predict future experience.

It must be noted that *psychology does not deal*

with the reality of human experience in the commonly accepted sense of the word. For instance, an individual develops the conviction that he is suffering from an inability to swallow, and that his throat is slowly closing up. The physician satisfies himself that the patient's throat is objectively normal, but fails to alter the patient's view. It is proved that the patient can swallow liquids but not solids, or *vice versa*, or that he can swallow when he is by himself, or when he is distracted and so on. The psychologist then deals with this experience not as unreal, but as real, but he establishes the fact that this is not a continued experience—that it does not fall in line with the rest of his declared experience, that it causes inconsistence in his behaviour. The psychologist is thus able to classify this as a dissociated phenomenon; in other words, as evidence of abnormal functioning of the mind.

On the other hand, let us take a patient who has just had his leg amputated. He complains of pain in his foot, and refuses to believe that his leg has been amputated until he is shown that it is not there. Then he believes, and gradually he learns to refer the pain in question to the stump where the nerves from the foot have been severed. Here, again, the psychologist has to deal with a real experience, but in this case the experience is a

continued one : it can be made to fall in with the rest of his experience—it causes no inconsistence in behaviour. Therefore, the psychologist can classify it as a normal and associated phenomenon ; he can resume similar experiences of individuals who have been in similar circumstances ; he can formulate a law and he can predict with tolerable accuracy that under similar circumstances any normal individual will have a similar experience. He can generalise from a number of such formulations that pain will be experienced and referred to the periphery whenever a sensory nerve is injured. Further, he finds that a painful experience can be reproduced without even injuring or stimulating a sensory nerve by merely calling up ideas connected with the original occasion of suffering. He does not on this account call the painful experience imaginary, but, on the contrary, the validity of the experience is confirmed to him by the fact of his being able to establish the conditions of its occurrence, and to predict, either in the individual or in a group of individuals, its recurrence.

If we now pass from subjective experience to objective behaviour, we are bound to take the same standpoint. The normal individual makes each decision of life on the strength of his previous experience, and as far as his conduct conforms to the results of that experience we call it rational,

and in so far as it conforms to the experience of the majority of individuals in comparable circumstances we call it conventional conduct. Normal behaviour is, therefore, founded on a rational basis. The patient who believed that his throat was closing up behaved irrationally because his inability to swallow was based upon an experience which was isolated and which did not harmonise with the rest of his experience. The man who did not believe that his leg had been amputated until he had ocular demonstration of it was perfectly rational, because the experience upon which he founded his belief had up till then been an adequate basis for believing in the presence of his leg.

A (*ii.*) Basis of Rational and Irrational Conduct

It is now becoming plain that *the rationality of human experience depends only on whether the experience in question can be classified as obeying established psychological laws which have been found to apply to rational human conduct.*

Let us take an example.—A fire breaks out in a theatre. Every individual who sees the flames or smells the smoke is justified in making for the door. His previous experience—acquired or transmitted by others—constitutes a peculiarly valid reason

for such conduct, and if he goes to a dozen theatres and in each one there is a fire, the rapidity of his departure becomes rather more than less reasonable on each successive occasion. But if, instead of seeing or smelling fire, he hears someone shout, "Fire, Fire," it is still a reasonable thing for him to move. His past experience says to him, "If anyone in this building believes there is a fire, I am justified in making for the door, even though I have not seen it." Now, let us suppose that our friend goes to the same theatre a dozen times and, that on each occasion, the same voice shouts, "Fire, fire," and that no fire ever occurs: it is obvious that the very experience, which on the first occasion constitutes a rational basis for departure, does so to a very limited degree the second time, and on each subsequent occasion, still less so. In fact, on the twelfth occasion, our friend would be acting unreasonably if he left his seat, because he has by this time had sufficient experience to know that these exclamations are not associated with danger, and if he does make a hurried exit we say that his conduct was founded on an inadequate rational basis, and the psychologist says that he has yielded to *suggestion—the attainment of a state of mind, and the execution of an act on an inadequate rational basis.*

Now it will be noted in these two examples that

there is no question as to the reality of the experience, the only question which comes within the field of psychology is as to the relation of the experience to previous experience, and its consequent claim to be regarded as a valid reason for certain action.

To make the point clearer, let us imagine that an ingenious psychologist, bent on experimenting, or an incredibly malicious mischief-maker, produces a gramophone record of the words, "Fire, fire," and then sets the gramophone to work in a theatre. There will probably be a stampede because the sounds produced will be almost indistinguishable from the human voice, and therefore these sounds reaching the ears of unsuspecting playgoers will produce the impression that an unknown person in the building has seen or smelt fire. If, then, the imitation of the human voice is successful, the audience will be acting rationally in making for the exits. In this case, the conduct which we class as rational has been based upon an experience dependent on misinterpretation of actual perception. The artifice produced—once only of course—the adequate rational basis for action which, as a matter of fact, was entirely uncalled for. In other words, the cry of the gramophone was real enough: the perception was actual: every member of the audience who was incapable of recognising the deception had a mental experience which

normally produced a certain action, though not one would have risen if he could have recognised the source of the sound at once. Here then we are dealing with a normal psychic mechanism with no abnormality or dissociation—merely a failure to differentiate between a human voice and its mechanical counterfeit.

But there is another way in which action of this sort could be produced. Let us suppose that I hypnotise a patient and make the following suggestion to him, "This evening at the theatre, in the middle of the third act, you will smell smoke, and you will rise and leave the theatre anticipating a fire." If the suggestion takes effect, it will manifestly do so on an inadequate rational basis. By artificial means I have produced a dissociation, and my patient has a mental experience which is in a sense unreal, in that it is groundless, but in the true sense it is valid enough in that I was able to predict his movements and to anticipate his exit. It is, however, obvious that such a suggestion will not succeed indefinitely.

To sum up then: the individual behaves rationally when he leaves the theatre after having an experience which reasonably produces apprehension of danger. Whether that experience be the sight of the flames or the cry of a lunatic or the

sounds of a gramophone matters not, provided that there is no particular element in the experience to indicate that it is not really associated with danger. If, in spite of such indication, he still leaves the theatre, he is acting irrationally and yielding to suggestion.

Now, *all human experience is either individual and immediate, or social and mediate.* The child learns—or ought to learn—not to put its finger in the candle flame by direct personal experience. Sooner or later the child puts its finger in or near the candle flame, and experiences the fact of pain, and thereafter avoids the repetition of the experience. The child who, in spite of this first experience, again puts its finger in the candle flame is acting irrationally. On the other hand, let us suppose that I am visiting a foundry; I see a great mass of molten lead and it is suggested that I should plunge my arm into it. All my previous experience would point to the certainty of my receiving serious injury if I did so, but on the other hand, I am assured by the manager, a man on whose integrity and common sense I rely, that he has frequently performed the feat without ever suffering in any way. I would then be justified in allowing the assertion of this reliable and experienced man to take the place of my own previous experience, and to act on his proposal. That act

would be a rational one in the circumstances described, because I would substitute for my own previous experience the *authority* of another as a rational basis of conduct. Now, one of the chief objects of social or tribal life as opposed to individual existence is to give to each individual in a readily atttainable form the advantage of the experience of other individuals. History constitutes a record of the experience of the past generations; the press affords us a record of the experience of our contemporaries—when, that is to say, it is fulfilling its true function. Rational behaviour must therefore be based on experiences which harmonise not only with the past experience of the individual but also with the experience of the race—that is, with history.

A (iii.) What constitutes valid Religious Experience?

Now, in dealing with religious phenomena from the psychological point of view, we cannot concern ourselves with the essential truth or untruth of the beliefs that constitute a given creed. Whether Mahomet, for instance, was an out-and-out impostor or a genuinely inspired man has nothing to do with the psychology of Islamism. In studying Islam, we have to collect the experiences of many individual believers in Islam, take note of their

behaviour, and with that material formulate the laws which would enable us to predict future behaviour in similar circumstances. As soon as we begin to deal with the actual truth or untruth of a belief, we are trespassing on the domains of ontology, and when we ask whether the resultant behaviour is desirable or otherwise, we are trespassing on ethics, which again is a different science from psychology. It is clear that in so far as psychology is concerned, it is a relatively clear issue to decide whether religious phenomena—all or any—come under the grouping of suggested experiences or not; whether they obey the laws of suggested experiences; whether it is possible to predict the resultant behaviour by the laws of rational or suggested conduct. From this it will be seen that history has a double part to play. Let us suppose we are dealing with a Buddhist. He has been taught certain facts about the life and teaching of Buddha; he has accepted these as true and it is our business as psychologists to investigate the *validity from his point of view* of the evidence, and the degree to which the beliefs harmonise with the rest of his experience, or whether gaps and overlappings, contradictions and inconsistencies necessarily follow. Then we have to enquire from the ethical point of view into the historical evidence of results, *i.e.* how far it

has been observed that belief in Buddha has tended to produce in the believer a life and conduct consistent with the highest ideals of our subject. In this investigation we remain within the scope of psychology because we do not enquire into the absolute or universal historical testimony, only into evidence in so far as it affects the rationality of our subject's belief, nor do we concern ourselves with absolute standards of desirable human behaviour but only with our subject's ethic in relation to the attainments of other believers in the same creed. Similarly a psychological investigation into my belief in Jesus Christ does not concern itself with whether Christ lived or died, but how far the evidence before *me* makes it reasonable for me to believe in His life and death, in other words, *only historical testimony within my grasp affects the rationality of my belief.* And in the same way, the power of Christianity to produce a noble life is outside the investigation ; all that falls within it is the observed and recorded influences of Christian belief to produce in other men such changes of behaviour as make for *my* ideal of manhood.

Before going further, there are certain elementary points of pure psychology which it is necessary to set down, in order to obviate future misunderstanding.

(a) *The limited function of reason in determining conduct.*

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that the human reason has merely a selecting, controlling or discriminating function. The reason, strictly speaking, is not dynamic any more than the keyboard of an organ or the hands that play it are dynamic. Emotions are at the back of all human activity, and the man that talks of being motivated in his behaviour by pure Reason (with a capital R) knows very little about the laws that govern his mind, and fails to recognise that some emotion—probably in his case, intellectual self-assertion—is always dominant. All that reason can do is to select these emotions; allow this one to occupy the field of consciousness; block that one out; permit this one to express itself in action; repress that one, and so on. Therefore the "rational" life differs from the so-called emotional life merely in the degree in which the reason forces a balanced expression of emotions in accordance with experience. The difference is merely that which lies between the well-played and the ill-played organ. In each case, there is the pressure of air that produces the sound; in the one case the notes are pressed and the stops opened in strict accordance with the score; in the other, one note is too long, another too

short, the swell applied in the wrong place, and so on.

(b) *Two meanings of the word "rational."*

It is necessary to emphasise the difference between rational in the utilitarian sense, and rational in an ethical sense. The word is used by many as representing that which can be justified on utilitarian and strictly practical grounds; whereas its meaning may suitably be extended to that which is justified on ethical grounds, though unjustifiable on utilitarian standards. As an example, one of the most precious social instincts is parental affection, and it is unquestionably desirable for the well-being of the community that this instinct should flourish, and not only flourish but transcend the limit of reason at times. Let us imagine the father of an idiot son sees that son fall overboard in mid-ocean. Reason says, "A useful life on which others depend must not be risked for a life that, *ex hypothesi*, is incapable of usefulness," but something higher than reason says: "For the good of the community it must always be felt that parental altruism will, when necessary, stop at no utilitarian considerations, and the useful life must be risked and, if necessary, lost—not for the sake of the useless life, but for the sake of the community."

We see, therefore, that all the talk about rational

life and reason dictating our behaviour is shallow and misleading, in that utilitarian considerations will never justify the highest type of behaviour. Such behaviour can only be justified by reference to the accumulated experience of the community —that is, to history. The father is not justified in risking his life for the idiot child, except on the ground that the accumulated and transmitted experience of past generations goes to show that the community suffers when it realises that parental love may be controlled by considerations of immediate utility. Similarly, one of the charges frequently brought against Christianity is equally shallow and misleading. It is said, " Science demands that our lives should be actuated by rational motives only." Are we to understand that behaviour is only to be based on objectively demonstrable facts ? That every purely subjective experience must be ignored in the framing of conduct ? That what makes for practical utility must outweigh that which stimulates and inspires ? Are we to understand the word rational in a true and historic sense ? May we take it that the choice of the noblest men in all ages was a " rational " choice as far as they were concerned, and may become a " rational " choice to us ? May we take it that *immediate utility is not the only basis of reason ?*

Between these two uses of the word rational lies a great part of the conflict of religion.

It must also be remembered that the test of conduct as being rational or otherwise, must not be entirely restricted to the conscious plane of each individual's mental life. Many an action which appears to be impulsive and unreasoned is the outcome of a rational process which is not obvious to the individual at the moment, and only to be unearthed afterwards on reflection and self-analysis.

(c) *Definition of Suggestion, Autosuggestion, Persuasion and Authority.*

In the third place we must make clear once for all the difference between suggestion and persuasion. Suggestion is constantly spoken of nowadays in a very loose sense as covering practically all the processes by which one mind influences another. This we must avoid, and having already defined *suggestion as the attainment of a state of mind, or the execution of an act, on an inadequate rational basis, it is easy to pass to a definition of persuasion as a similar process, but on an adequate rational basis.* For example, if a palmist tells a man that he will be drowned at sea, and if in consequence he cancels his passage to New York, he is acting on suggestion ; but on the other hand, if he learns that the vessel is in a doubtful state,

and that the underwriters have asked five shillings extra per cent., he is yielding to persuasion because there is a rational basis for his action. Again, if a competent meteorologist were to warn him that during the days he expected to be crossing the Atlantic there was almost certain to be a severe cyclone in the liner's track, he would again be justified in yielding to the fear this warning would be likely to beget. In each case the fear of drowning was the emotion that became operative; in the first case the reason should have repressed it, in the others it was justified in allowing it expression.

Suggestion being what we have defined it, it follows that *autosuggestion is the execution of an act, or the attainment of a state of mind upon an inadequate and self-implanted basis.* For instance, the lady who is going out for a day on the river ignores the obvious signs of a rainy day and the warning of barometer and thermometer; she puts on the flimsy frock only suited to a hot day, because she desires to look her best. Her optimism is autosuggested, and her actions contrary to the demands of reason.

To act upon authority is a combination of suggestion and persuasion. When I act upon authority, I believe that I am acting on an adequate rational basis, whereas in the opinion of other

people the basis is so inadequate as to bring my action into the category of suggestion. Now in the Roman Catholic Church, the believer is expected to carry out implicitly the prescription of a priest, no matter how ill-equipped in mentality and education that priest may be as compared to the believer who, though intellectual and well read, is but a layman. To an outsider it appears that when the layman subordinates his judgment to that of such a priest, it constitutes a manifestation of suggestion; whereas the layman considers that he has had an ample rational basis for his action, in that the individual to whose judgment he subordinates his own is ordained and wears a cassock.

B. Social Psychic Mechanisms

Now, in investigating the vast mass of experience classed as religious, we shall find groups of experiences that are clearly suggested; others that depend upon social influences; others that obey the laws of mob psychology, and many that must be classed as rational processes. We shall see that in some cases belief is founded on a purely emotional basis; that in others it has been reached by strictly logical steps; that here the element of authority is paramount, and there the individual has depended almost entirely on his immediate experience. With some, purely pragmatic considerations seem to have

been operative; whereas others have a faith that transcends utility and reason.

We have seen that the individual rightly accepts a great mass of experience from his fellows by means of various social influences. Now "la contagion mentale" acts in two ways, and it is very essential to differentiate between these two. The first is the normal method of wholesome social influences; the second is the method of mob hysteria. These two ways may, with advantage, be compared in tabular form :—

Normal Social Influences.	Mob Hysteria.
1. Polyideism.	Monoideism.
2. Acts from above downwards.	Acts from below upwards.
3. Based upon history.	Ignores history.
4. Produces a harmony.	Produces a unison.
5. Is aided by reflection.	Is conditioned by pure impulse.

Later on we shall see that both these processes occur in the sphere of religion, and it is important that they be not confused.

1. By polyideism we mean that each individual who is subjected to normal social influences receives from others additional ideas to those he already possesses; whereas in a case of mob hysteria, each individual tends to lose those ideas which are not common to his fellows; in other words, a single idea attains such dominating proportions in the minds of each member of the mob

that all other ideas become relatively unimportant.

2. When we say that normal social influences act from above downwards, we mean that the poorer, weaker and less experienced of the community profit from the ideas that are offered to them by the richer, stronger and more experienced. On the other hand, in mob hysteria, it is the poorer element in the community whose minds are dominated by a single idea, and who thereby affect the better and stronger element.

3. Normal social influences again are based on history, that is to say they do not urge lines of policy and action which have been proved by history to be unsuccessful. In mob hysteria, however, the intense realism of the moment and the surging passions that demand satisfaction take into consideration neither warnings nor encouragements from the previous experience of the race.

4. With normal social influences a harmony is produced; for instance, a community may be agreed about the desirability of observing Sunday as a day of rest; some may advance this view on purely physical grounds, others again may look at it as a provision for the educational advancement of the community, and so on. In mob hysteria, on the other hand, there is no variation of standpoint or outlook; there can be no division as to motive, but all the members of the community must

be agreed in the single motive, though possibly not upon the actual form in which it is expressed.

5. Normal social influences again are aided by reflection: time strengthens the hands of the richer element in the community, whereas time is against the demagogue and the orator. His success depends upon an immediate response to the impulse which he has stirred up.

Now, under the heading of *normal social influences* we note first parental instruction and example. This has in it the element of implicit authority. It is the earliest mental influence that comes to bear on the child. It is both normal and desirable that the child should accept the experiences of his parents with hardly any criticism, not only in religious matters but in all things. It is also normal and right that in due course the effect of many of these implanted ideas should wear off, and that it should be essential for the individual to acquire his own direct experience. For instance, it is right that a child should accept the experience of his parents when they tell him that it is inadvisable to sit on the wet grass, and it will be perfectly satisfactory for the individual to maintain that belief without direct experience by way of confirmation, until he sees that this belief is consistent with various other direct experiences of his own. On the other hand, if his parents bring him up with

the belief that all alcohol is poison and to partake of it is deadly sin, it is essential that as soon as possible he should seek confirmatory evidence of this—not necessarily directly—because it is quite certain that sooner or later he will find that these views of his parents are strongly antagonistic to views held by a number of people whose opinion he usually respects. It follows, therefore, that the more human experience is consonant, the less necessity there is for direct confirmation by the individual, whereas the more it tends to vary, the less excuse is there for the acceptance of ideas without discrimination or individual test. In politics, for instance, we frequently see that the man who holds views divergent from those commonly held in his social environment is the man who has thought most, and who is most capable of defending those views. It is the same in religious matters. Normal social influences are at work on most young people which tend to familiarise them with religious ideas as held by their section of the community. To the mother's first Bible instruction is added the contribution of the teacher, and to the sum of these is added the preacher's share; the influence is working from above downwards; it tends to produce a religious harmony in that particular group, and it is strengthened by time and reflection. At the same time it cannot

constitute a permanent and satisfactory personal religion simply because in so far as direct experience has entered into it, that experience has been suggested, and we have already seen that suggested experiences are not continued experiences. Therefore, to attain a permanent and satisfactory religion, it is necessary that direct experience should occur and that as soon as possible, otherwise the religion will be unstable and superficial—a mere creed in fact, as opposed to a living experiental religion. Yet in religion, as in every other department of human experience, normal social influences are extremely valuable, and rightly so. They serve to hand over to the individual condensed and summarised experiences of past generations, and thus tend to obviate great waste in the direct acquiring of personal experience, though they do not, or should not, render unnecessary such immediate experience wherever the opinion of the community is not harmonious. One of the main lines of attack on religion is that it is largely acquired from authority—that it has been transmitted like an entailed possession, and that but for instruction in youth no one would believe in any religion. Curiously enough, the very people who are loudest in making this criticism are the most active in conducting propaganda of one sort or another—they hold " Socialist Sunday Schools,"

or they orate in Hyde Park, or they disseminate anti-religious or other literature: in a word they approve of social influences when used in favour of their own tenets, but not otherwise.

Turning now to *mob hysteria*, we note an entirely diverse group of phenomena. It works less constantly and regularly than the normal social influences, and shows itself under completely different circumstances. Many of the most notable movements in history have been due to the contagion of the crowd—the Crusades, the French Revolution, lynchings in North America—examples could be multiplied indefinitely; and in all, the same factor has been at work—collective suggestibility: a group of individuals suffering under the sense of a common injustice, or consumed with a common resentment for a wrong done; progressive intensification of the one idea while other ideas become proprotionately obscured; gradual yielding on the part of the higher units of the rational equilibrium in favour of the irrational monoideism of the lower units; the production of a great unison, and the whole process depending for its consummation on the continuity which ensures a steady crescendo and obviates the possibility of rational readjustment of idea values. This is the explanation of the lightning-like character of some of the most important upheavals of history

—rapidity was of their nature, deliberation would have killed them.

As a psychological process, mob hysteria is chiefly to be condemned because it implies a disturbance of the relative value of ideas; but in every other feature it constitutes, as has been pointed out, a second-rate psychical mechanism, albeit a mechanism whereby righteous ends may occasionally, if not frequently, be attained.

But *to explain the mechanism is not to explain the source.*

In the religious sphere we witness revivals that exhibit all these characteristics. We rightly regard them with suspicion, because the experiences attained in such states of high suggestibility do not tend to persist, but, at the same time, we cannot discount their value entirely, any more than we can condemn every secular upheaval which has depended on the same factors. Here, again, it is interesting to note that the man who disapproves most emphatically of the Welsh Revival is often the one who is most indulgent in his view of the French Revolution. If a movement is to be condemned because its psychological mechanism is a second-rate one, then the French Revolution and the Welsh Revival go together. If, on the other hand, the results are to be accepted as justification of the means in

the one case, they must be similarly accepted in the other. The actual psychological mechanism whereby a given result is attained may be normal or abnormal. If it is normal, it does not necessarily follow that the result is desirable; if it is abnormal, the result is not on that account only to be condemned. All we can say, therefore, is that every religious movement due to mob hysteria must be judged on its own intrinsic merit, and that it is a matter of scientific observation that results so obtained tend to be transitory and, therefore, of inferior value.

C. Valuation of Suggestive Mechanisms

I. In estimating the value of suggestive processes with regard to religion, we can differentiate four definite groups :—

(*a*) Normal social influences making for religion.

(*b*) Normal social influences making against religion.

(*c*) Hysterical mob influences making for religion.

(*d*) Hysterical mob influences making against religion.

In dealing with these four groups, let us first take examples of each; then we shall investigate the types susceptible to each, and finally inquire into the results of each.

Examples of the normal social influences have

already been given. Of those that make for religion, we may cite the teaching of a devout mother, the example of a religious father, the instructions of teachers, the exhortations of preachers, the inspiration of religious literature, and so on.

Of the opposite kind of these influences we may mention the scoffing of irreligious companions, the destructive criticism of materialistic teachers, especially teachers of natural science, the reading of agnostic literature, and so on.

Of the third class we have already given examples, the Welsh Revival, the Crusades; but, as a matter of fact, the East supplies far more examples than the West.

Finally, we come to the mob influences making against religion. One of the most notable examples of this group was the anti-religious activity of the Commune.

II. When we turn to inquire who are susceptible to these various influences, we see that it is largely a matter of suggestibility. A suggestion becomes operative according to the following factors:—

(*a*) Susceptibility of the subject.

(*b*) i. Prestige of the operator; ii. Skill of the operator.

(*c*) Mental co-efficient of suggested ideas.

The suggestibility of an individual to suggestion may, for the purposes of the present discussion,

be looked upon as a primary mental characteristic, largely native and partly acquired. It follows, therefore, that certain individuals will all their lives be more affected than others by social and mob influences, both for and against religion. A moderate degree of suggestibility is both usual and normal. Therefore, the foundations of religious (as well as other forms of) experience are laid by suggestion. The child who is not influenced by his mother's teaching, the girl that is not helped by her teacher's instruction, the boy that reads good books and gets no inspiration—all these are abnormally insusceptible to suggestion, and their lives are the poorer for it. What would we say of the boy who refused to sing the National Anthem because he considered his country's history open to serious criticism, and he would have preferred to have been born under another flag? Yet, he is merely displaying an abnormal insusceptibility to suggestion, which we recognise, in this case, as an impoverishing factor in early life.

The second group of factors determining successful suggestion are those depending on the operator. The prestige of the operator is of primary importance, and normally the parent stands in the front rank, but there are sure to be others. The schoolmaster who is popular can

apply suggestion to his pupils much more successfully than his unpopular colleague; the lecturer with a great reputation and many titles is much less critically listened to than a local luminary; but the skill of the operator is also important. The preacher who can frame his address skilfully, the parliamentary candidate who speaks with conviction, the leader-writer who leaves the reader completely persuaded—all these are masters of suggestion, and in the religious life of a country much will depend on the skill with which the first religious ideas are implanted.

We come now to the actual content of the suggestion as affecting the probability of execution. The *mental co-efficient* of religious ideas in general is determined by their intrinsic value, relative standing, and number, as opposed to those qualities in the antagonistic ideas. Let us, for instance, take a drunkard who is exposed to religious influences. Whether he accepts religion and forswears alcohol will depend on the relative worth in his estimation of the promised peace, and satisfaction of the religious life, and the actually experienced joys of early intoxication plus the reaction of returning to sobriety, the financial and social degradation, and so on. In the next place, it will depend on the relative standing of religious

ideas as opposed to the alcoholic, that is, how far the religious ideas are novel and unwonted and how far the alcoholism is familiar, habitual, and ingrained. In the third place, the number of ideas favourable and antagonistic to religion will contribute to the final result—the frequency with which opportunities for indulgence occur as opposed to the number of times a religious appeal is made, and so forth.

III. We have now to consider the most important of the three questions, namely, what results follow the application of social suggestive influences, and here we reach the very kernel of the question. We have pointed out at an earlier stage that the scientific discussion of religious phenomena from the psychological point of view must consist in the enumeration of such experiences, their classification, resumption, and the formulation of laws which will enable us to predict future experiences for the individual. We have seen that, normally, suggestion enters into all religious development. We have also seen that under usual conditions the effects of mob hysteria have to be reckoned with, but that these tend to be transitory.

The question now resolves itself into this: *How far are the effects of any religious suggestion permanent, and how far do such suggested religious ideas suffice to produce behaviour consistent with*

religious ethic? In order to discuss this intelligently we must realise clearly that all religion essentially involves conflict, for in so far as a religious system deserves the name, it sets before its followers an ethic which is, to a greater or less degree, incompatible with the gratification of his normal animal instincts.

D. The Psychology of the Critic

It may be as well at this point, having dealt at length with the psychology of the believer, to devote a small amount of space to the psychology of the critic. The forms of attack which are most prevalent nowadays are—

(1) Christianity is based upon an irrational belief.

(2) Christianity as shown forth in the lives of many professed converts is neither as stable nor as ethical as the founder of Christianity claimed that it should be.

The first of these contentions we shall deal with presently; it is based upon the inability of the critic to distinguish between a direct subjective experience which has grown out of an experience originally suggested and mediate on the one hand, and, on the other, an experience which has never been a personal first-hand experience. It cannot be too often reiterated that there is no direct test

of subjective experience: whether an individual complains of toothache or boasts of conversion, not one of us can gainsay his statement, for no test may be made either of the intensity of the toothache or the validity of the conversion. But there is something which we may say with almost certain accuracy about the critic, namely, that when A claims to have been converted, and B expresses incredulity at the validity of A's experience, B must necessarily be biassed. It is impossible for any man to contemplate with detachment the failure of a religious system which, in the loftiness of its ethics throws his own standards and attainments into most condemnatory relief. The Gospel of Christ condemns the world as no religious system has ever condemned it, because it condemns the world for its thought, and not altogether for its action. To the average man this is intolerable, and the one thing calculated to make it tolerable is to prove, in some shape or form, that Christianity is morbid in its psychological mechanism, or futile in its ethical results.

Now, a genuine Christian experience is conditioned by substitution of the interests of God and His Kingdom for those of the individual. It does not come easy to the average human being to think of his ego with its many interests and its many forms of self-assertion, and to yield his own

life up, as a mere channel for the expression of the Spirit of God. Our critic knows this; every sceptic recognises it more or less consciously, and when you hear a man talking loudly of how impossible it is for him to believe in that which cannot be logically proven to him, you may take it as a general rule that this is the euphemism under which he cloaks his inability to surrender himself. No doubt there are men and women whose life is of exemplary self-effacement and admirable self-abnegation, who yet assert that in the plan of redemption they see nothing but a medley of Semitic mythology, Jewish nationalism, and Eastern symbolism. If the enemies of Christianity consisted of no others than these unbiassed sceptics of saintly life, if would indeed be a small matter to take up their challenge in defence of the religion of Christ. But the vast majority of unbelievers are, as we have already pointed out, of another kind—those who wittingly or unwittingly endeavour to satisfy their own sense of personal shortcoming by discrediting, both in origin and result, all that is implied in the system of Christianity.

Now, when the sceptic is attacking the actual experience of a Christian believer, and throws himself upon the ethical results and repudiates them as feeble or inadequate, he invariably, or

almost invariably, falls into the fallacy of attaining to a general conclusion from a particular premiss. He singles out a certain individual of his acquaintance whose practical Christian life is unworthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and from that he proceeds to denounce Christianity as incapable of producing first-rate ethical results. Occasionally there arises a bold critic like Nietzsche, who takes the results of Christianity in a mass and bases his generalisations upon historical and general premisses. This is undoubtedly perfectly fair, and when you fall in with a critic who honestly maintains that the world would be a better place to live in if the Sermon on the Mount had never been uttered, you and he have a clear issue, and by reducing his contention to particular terms and applying the *argumentum ad hominem*, it is often possible to dislodge him from his position. At any rate, this critic is logical in his attack. The other type of sceptic is the man who refuses to believe in Christianity because X, who recently announced his conversion, got drunk on Saturday night, and by concentrating his whole attention on this one fact, our sceptic derives much consolation in the painful memory of his having himself been drunk, not only on Saturday, but also on Friday night.

The life of every thinking being is, in one of

its aspects, a conflict between animal instincts on the one hand, and ethical ideals on the other.

As we know there is an infinite number of degrees in which success and failure can be attained. When we call a man a saint, we mean that his lower self has been, as completely as possible, effaced, and that the highest ethical standard has been attained. The villain, on the other hand, has given free rein to his animal passions and instincts and turned his back, as far as he can, upon anything resembling an ethical standard. Between these two there is every possible gradation of goodness or badness. Now, the average man, whether he wishes it or not, has an ethical standard, probably acquired from his early upbringing, which is considerably in advance of his own propensities. Were this not the case, the evolution of the race would become negative instead of positive. In so far, however, as the average man recognises this incompatibility between his ethical standards and his own achievements, or at any rate, his own inclinations, it behoves him to reconcile the two. This he does by a process of rationalising. Either he maintains that his ethical standard is very right and proper for the mass of mankind, but in his particular case there is a number of valid reasons for his not acting up to it; or he may excuse the poor quality of his achievements by

asserting that his intentions were good and his motives admirable, but that his actions were forced by uncontrollable circumstances to make a mean appearance.

E. Suggestion and Individual Experience

To return now to the question of the permanency of the effects of religious suggestion : the religious life—indeed, the whole life of man—being, as we have described it, a conflict, we have to ask to what extent religious experiences can and do assist the individual to overcome his lower instincts. The answer to this is that such assistance can be reckoned on as a permanent controlling influence over behaviour. What suggestion can do, and normally should do, is to produce in the individual a certain subjective sensation. In a sense this is artificial, just as the glow of patriotic fervour in a boy's soul is artificial. It has been suggested by those in a position to influence him ; it has been fostered by sensory appeals such as flags, music, and uniforms ; it is necessarily not his own, because he is still incapable of abstracting the qualities of his fatherland to the point of adopting the abstraction as an object of affection. Yet, in spite of its exotic character, in spite of its suggestive origin, it is admittedly wholesome and in practice tends to develop into a patriotism which

belongs to the individual himself, being in the end the outcome of his own immediate experiences. The patriot has seen the behaviour of his fellow-countrymen, and also that of aliens; he has drawn comparisons in favour of the former; he has read the history of his country, and judged it creditable and honourable; he has recognised a spirit of self-sacrifice in his compatriots that has stimulated actions that demand his admiration; he feels that it would be gratifying to suffer for the sake of the principles championed by his country; that the type of character developed under this patriotic stimulus is one that coincides with his ideal. Such observations and judgments on the part of the individual produce a profound and persisting mental attitude which is totally different from the early sentiment of patriotism resulting from the early suggestion of parents and teachers. Men do not lay down their lives for a merely suggested sentiment, or rather, they may risk their lives once on suggestion, but they will not continue to do so. The continuous self-effacement of the true patriot, the uniform disregard of selfish interests—these things are the product of direct and immediate experiences. *An emotional complex (such as that of patriotism) can be primarily modelled by teaching and suggestion, but it can have none of those enduring characters*

which make for practical utility and useful activity, unless it has been hardened in the furnace of immediate experience.

It is the same in the sphere of religion. An individual's religious experience may be wholly suggested and devoid of any immediate element; or it may be made up altogether of direct experience; or else it may contain both elements. Let us take each of these classes separately.

The first is by no means a small class. It is quite usual to observe a devout and pious youth who ranks as religious and behaves consistently as such. As he grows up, life brings its heavy artillery to play on the fortress of his virtue and he capitulates. The religious sentiment which had hitherto been sufficient to resist the stress of lower instincts and produce behaviour consistent with the religious ethic breaks down. The individual experiences greater satisfaction and pleasure from self-indulgence than he had ever previously experienced from his religious life. To keep such an one true to his declared aspirations it is necessary to keep him constantly subjected to right suggestions. Just as some patients can never be made independent of the physician, and have no health except it be constantly suggested to them, so it is with these religious invertebrates. And yet from this class we get these amazing

miracles that the psychologist seeks in vain to explain—the sudden transformation of the invertebrate into a strong character. An individual such as we have described unexpectedly passes through a religious experience, which, with dramatic suddenness, takes the place of all suggested religious sentiment, and in a moment makes him independent of suggestive influences. In an instant he realises that without further human aid he can attain a sense of satisfaction, gratification, and contentment which surpasses any such sense previously begotten in him by the varied experiences of his past life, whether of suggested religious aspiration or of mere yielding to natural instincts.

But, on the other hand, this first class that we are considering also provides the examples of unstable conversion frequently associated with religious revivals. Enough has been said to make clear the similarity in certain respects between the normally suggested experiences of a child brought up in a religious atmosphere, and those abnormally suggested by a mechanism of mob hysteria during a period of revival. The main difference, from a practical point of view, is that the latter, being more sudden, taking place in an older person and being opposed to antagonistic ideas, which are more numerous and better de-

veloped, demand a much more rapid replacement by a direct experience if the spiritual aspirations are to be constant. Hence we can formulate the law that the higher the degree of suggestibility conditioning a given religious change, the more transient does it tend to be, while at the same time, history and our own observation both go to show that the most exotic suggested experiences are capable of replacement by such direct experiences as constitute in the truest sense a stable religious life.

The second class we mentioned is a small one. It includes those whose religious life has been made up solely of immediate experience: men who have been unaffected by the usual influences of religious suggestion and who—suddenly it may be, or gradually—come to realise the need for repentance, the peace of resisting lower instincts, and the joy of achievement. These are seekers after truth to whom ordinary social influences mean little; who must find out things for themselves, and who, when the experience has come to them, present religious lives of special stability.

The largest class of all is the third, the mixed type. Here the religious experiences are first suggested, and gradually yield to fuller and more permanent direct experiences. With them the transition may be gradual or sudden, and there

may or may not be a hiatus. If animal tendencies prevail before the direct experiences have taken place, the original suggestions will, nevertheless, contribute to the reinstatement of the religious aspiration, for that which is commonly called "conscience" (*i.e.* an appreciation of the religious ethic) will, though latent, persist throughout the intervening period.

The religious life may be compared to a series of journeys between two points. There is a direct and obvious road which runs along the valley and is the broadest. There is also a longer path which leads by the ridge and is steeper and more difficult. The ordinary experience of the individual prompts him to take the broader and more direct, and his natural instincts and his love of ease confirm this choice. On the other hand, people whose judgment he respects, and whose achievements command his admiration, and whose good opinion he values, habitually travel by the mountain path. They tell him him that it is drier and safer on the ridge; that there are no bogs or pitfalls, that the sun is warmer and the breeze more refreshing, and that it is their constant experience that they arrive at their destination not only fresher and fitter, but also in shorter time. Furthermore, these people quote a guide-book of repute, which advises the high road and not the

low. If the individual takes the high road, it is obvious that he has no adequate rational basis for doing so because of his lack of experience. He decides to accept the declared experience of those who have performed the journey often. His decision is, therefore, due to suggestion. When he has travelled by the mountain path and experienced for himself all that has been told him he is in possession of a completely new set of facts. He may or may not decide to travel that way next time, but he has experienced the sun and the air, the safety and exhilaration that he has never experienced in the valley. Next time he decides to take the high road his decision is based upon immediate, and not mediate, experience, on subjective knowledge and not on objective report. And he can add to the evidence that prevailed with him, his own personal testimony—in other words, the father's teaching can only ensure a trial; the son must find out and satisfy himself if he is to walk consistently in his father's footsteps.

IV

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND RESULTS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Introduction

Psychology then is concerned only with the process by which Christian experience is produced, not with the question of the objective reality which may or may not be behind that experience. It merely foretells what kind of results will be produced by particular experiences, and does not profess to decide on their absolute value to the individual or the community, nor on what is popularly termed their objective reality.

But to convince our opponent of the limitations of psychology does not really dispose of his difficulty. When he accuses Christian experience of being mere self-hypnotism or autosuggestion, what he is really concerned to deny is that there is an objective reality corresponding to the phenomena of Christian experience. This is equally his real concern when he drops terms of autosuggestion and turns back to saying, " Christian experience

is all imagination," or " Christian experience is purely subjective." His attack is as urgently in need of an answer as ever. How shall we attempt to resolve the question of whether there is an objective reality behind Christian experience, since psychology refuses to resolve it for us? We must turn first from the domain of psychology to the realm of *ethics*. Even our foes among psychologists bid us seek light there. Ribot, for example, says, " The religious feeling is a fact which psychology simply analyses and follows in its transformations, but it is incompetent in the matter of its objective value." Elsewhere he says, after declaring that pure psychology is incapable of discovering any positive difference between the autosuggestions of creative genius and other forms of autosuggestion, " The criterion must be looked for elsewhere. To find it, we must leave the world of thought, and proceed objectively. We must judge the idea, not as it is in itself, but by its effects. What are its results considered practically, or considered in the æsthetic, moral, scientific, or religious sphere? It has value just in so far as its fruits have value." [1] Autosuggestions, then, differ in value, and we shall begin our search for light on the objective reality of Christian experience by a study of the character-

[1] " Essai sur l'Imagination Creatrice," p. 74.

istics and results of that experience in the social and moral sphere, *i.e.* in the realm of ethics. We shall hope to show that Christian experience has immense worth in that sphere, and that if it be the result of autosuggestion, it is an autosuggestion of extreme value. We shall hope, also, to show, as we pursue our study, that there are many features in Christian experience extraordinarily difficult to explain on the autosuggestion hypothesis, and that the " unexplained residue " (cp. chap. i.) when psychology has done her perfect work is of a kind to give serious pause to the most ardent supporter of the autosuggestion theory.

But our examination must carry us beyond the domain of ethics into that of *metaphysics*, for a discussion of the objective reality behind any experience is necessarily a metaphysical discussion, and our minds refuse to content themselves without it. We cannot rest satisfied with a mere admission of value. As Flournoy, commenting on Ribot's position just quoted, says :

> " Admit value, and perforce you admit appreciation from the moral or social point of view, and in consequence teleology, philosophy of history, and in the end of the day, metaphysics."

If the supreme value of Christian experience be once admitted, there is no escape from the obligation to think things through to the end. We

must ask ourselves why, in the nature of things, Christian experience has this peculiar value. This leads us inevitably to an examination of its source, and of the ultimate nature and worth of that source.

We shall therefore discuss two main questions with regard to Christian experience, namely,

(1) What light is thrown on the question of an objective reality corresponding to Christian experience by a study of the results and character of that experience?

(2) What light is thrown on the question of an objective reality corresponding to Christian experience by a study of the sources of that experience?

(1) RESULTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

A. Uniformity of Christian Experience

Psychologists tell us that a man's illusions are conditioned by his temperament, training, and environment: that which he will suggest to himself or what can be suggested to him is conditioned in exactly the same way. By hypnotic suggestion "it is rarely possible to ensure performance of a disagreeable or very unusual action, and it is never possible to insist on an immoral

act or one which is contrary to the deep-rooted instincts of the subject." Hypnotic suggestion will no more make a Bishop dance with his wife on Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday, than it will enable the costermonger to fulfil adequately the duties of Black Rod. Bearing this principle in mind, it is difficult to account on the autosuggestion theory for the extraordinary unanimity of Christian testimony to the almost universal presence of certain elements in Christian experience in Christians of all ages, of different countries, of different races, at different periods of the Church's history.

"History impartially studied shows that Christian experience is not confined to certain rare individuals, or groups of individuals, drawn from a particular environment: but that it can be, and is found over and over again through the history of nineteen centuries, that it can be and actually is reproduced in the most diverse human beings, the lowest savage and the most educated modern. We can, therefore, draw the remarkable inference that Christian experience is in a certain sense independent of intellectual, social, ethnic and anthropological conditions."[1]

Experience of communion with God, sense of

[1] Henri Bois, "La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse," p. 166.

sin and shortcoming, sense of forgivenesss, peace, these are universal elements in Christian experience. On these points the Salvation Army convert and the intellectual mystic join hands across the psychological gulf which separates them, the Japanese and the English across the gulf of race, St Paul, St Augustine, St Francis, Luther, Wesley, Livingstone, across the gulf of centuries. Mental contagion, mob psychology, and autosuggestion will equally fail to explain the unanimity of their testimony.

In one particular direction the uniformity of Christian experience is especially remarkable if the autosuggestion theory be accepted. As above stated, it is almost impossible by hypnotic suggestion to secure the performance of a disagreeable or dangerous act : a subject can easily be induced to blow his nose or sneeze, but the suggestion that he should put his fist through a pane of glass rouses the antagonism of deep-seated instincts—he can not be made to do it. Even more difficult is it for a man by self-suggestion to drive himself to the disagreeable. Autosuggestion before self-induced sleep absolutely fails to make the sleeper tumble out of bed !

Now, there is a constant element in Christian experience which is unpalatable and humiliating. Consciousness of sin, or, at any rate, of failure

and weakness, of need for the help of another, appears at some stage, and usually at an early stage in every Christian's experience: against this, human pride rebels. A few natures have a morbid craving for humiliation, but to the majority of sane, healthy men and women, confession of sin, whether to themselves, to God, or to another man, is contrary to their deep-seated instincts.

And yet the autosuggestion theory requires us to believe that it is just these deep-seated instincts which autosuggestion is strong enough to overcome in almost every Christian man and woman alive.

The Christian explanation is otherwise.

> "If a history of Christian character could be written the work might be one of extreme value. Here would appear every variety of nature, the strong and the tender, the man of action and the poet, the leader and the philosopher—all types singly and in every possible combination —transformed and inspired in a new way, progressively and collectively moving forward, and advancing mankind with them toward the realisation of a larger and ampler humanity. And the gist of the story would not be some vague abstract noun—some theory of evolution: *it would be a record of struggle against one influence, ending in surrender to it, and in a new life lived in the power of another: and that other would always be the same.*" [1]

[1] T. R. Glover, "The Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society," p. 25.

But it will be argued the study of religious experience throws into relief its extraordinary *variety* far more clearly than its uniformity. To-day, the very layest of laymen has read William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the title has caught the public ear. Psychology makes clear that the accompaniments and setting of every religious experience, nay more, its colour and form, are determined by the environment, temperament, mentality, training and previous experience of the subject. A highly strung woman missionary sees devil possession where her comrade, the medical missionary, sees epilepsy and hysteria. St Catherine of Siena's dedication of herself to Christ was sealed by the reception of the stigmata : a modern student volunteer's by the conviction which he obeys that he must change his course from law to theology, from classics to medicine. One man is converted at the penitent form of the Salvation Army to the accompaniment of a brass band and noisy hymns, another at the Welsh Revival with physical agony and a vision, another in his own study when quietly summing up the results of many months careful study of the evidence for the Resurrection : another can point to no particular crisis of any kind in his spiritual life ; and every one of these varieties of religious experience may be accounted for psychologically

on natural grounds, as the result of training, environment, heredity, etc. We are not concerned to deny this, nay, rather it is to our interest to lay all possible stress on the purely psychological explanation of many of the varieties of religious experience, for the easier it is to account for the varieties of religious experience on grounds of race, temperament, environment, etc., the more difficult it becomes to account on the same grounds for the persistent uniformity of certain elements of Christian experience in the face of essential differences of race, mentality, education. Once again, the extraordinary variety of types of conversion, all of which are psychologically explicable on natural grounds, compared with the distinct type of character ultimately produced as a result of these conversions, surely points to a divine force at work.

> " The reading of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and my own psychological studies have shown me in the clearest way the great variety and the extreme diversity of individual religious conversions (even those which appear similar are seen to be different when examined closely), combined with the profound unity of the normal Christian life to which these diverse conversions lead. This unity attained in spite of and by way of the extremely diverse conversions constitutes an argument which in the eye of the Christian

tells heavily in favour of the conclusion that there is an external and superior power at work, which seizes the individual just as he is, takes account of his temperament, his nature, his environment, and his capacities (thus giving rise to the diversity of conversions) and which nevertheless directs each individual to the same end, namely perfection in Christ (Col. i. 28)."[1]

B. The Unexpectedness of Christian Experience

The autosuggestion theory of Christian experience assumes that the Christian autosuggestionist will get the kind of experience which he expects and seeks. The hypnotic or mob psychology theory assumes that a man exposed to the influence of some persuasive preacher or excited crowd, will reproduce the experience described by the preacher or dominating the crowd. But what of the experiences which the subject neither expects nor seeks? Yet such experiences are by no means rare. It sometimes happens that a man cut off from Church life and ignorant of Christian truth has some spiritual experience which is so far from being suggested to him by any previous experience or by anything that he has seen or heard, that he is absolutely unable to interpret it: he considers it unique, until later, on coming into

[1] Henri Bois, "La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse," p. 199.

contact with Christians, he finds that his experience is by no means unique, and he interprets it by means of the truths they teach him.

The experience of the Apostles at the time of the Resurrection was of the unexpected character : they mourned their Lord with the hopelessness of those who believed Him lost to them for ever : apparently they neither expected nor sought the experience of communion with the Risen Lord— they were psychologically unprepared to suggest to themselves the experience which as a matter of fact became theirs.

But these experiences of an unexpected and unsought character, as well as those sought and suddenly attained, are explained by modern psychologists on the explosive theory of conversion ; the sudden invasion of the unconscious into the sphere of consciousness. There gathers in the unconscious a crowd of impressions which little by little accumulate, are elaborated according to the laws of psychology and logic until a complex is formed, which at last issues explosively into the conscious and upsets its ordinary equilibrium.

No doubt some such ripening in the unconscious is the mechanism by which many conversions take place ; and explains their unexpected character. But if taken by itself, as a full and sufficient explanation of all sudden conversions, and as

eliminating all need for reference either to the action of man's free will, or God's grace acting through such mechanism, it will be found to break down in face of facts well known to all psychologists who have carefully studied the psychology of conversion.

What, for instance, about those cases in which the conscious is obviously directing and endeavouring to hasten the process in the unconscious leading to explosion—those conversions on which the will of the subject is bent, and which nevertheless are very long delayed, or which never take place at all ?

Take, for instance, the classic example of the many years during which John Wesley struggled after the conversion which tarried so long. Everyone of us knows the man who believes with all his heart that Christian experience is both necessary and possible, and who agonises to get it. He now attends revival meetings of the Salvation Army, now tries an ornate form of ritual, now hangs on the words of powerful preachers. No use! "He consults experienced spiritual advisers, perhaps confesses to a priest. All to no purpose. He eagerly studies the records of the spiritual experiences of others, reproduces a certain series of movements and states of mind according to some official instructions, goes regularly through the

whole gamut, and after having done everything, and tried everything by rule and under direction, finds at last that he has followed a dream." [1]

What has such a man done if not to autosuggest Christian experience, or to expose himself in a highly expectant and susceptible condition to the influence of hetero-suggestion, or to the working of mob psychology, both exerted to give him exactly what he seeks? What has he done, but to use his will so as to hasten the ripening of a complex in the unconscious, which should result in an explosive conversion of the type he desires? The Christian theory can account for his failure, for it allows for the Coming of Another, in response to the spirit of the child. "Religion is child's play, *if* you will only be the child." But why, on the autosuggestion or mob psychology theory, or the explosive theory of conversion, are such seekers as the above so often denied the fulfilment of their yearning?

Take again, the completely opposite type of conversions, those which not only take place very suddenly, but in which there is apparently no time for the gradual formation of that complex of ideas in the unconscious which should suddenly invade the conscious. Here the difficulty of the

[1] A. Vinet, "Etudes sur la littérature française du 19me siècle," part iii. p. 255.

explosive theory is not the delay of the conversion, but its too rapid arrival on the scene. In the mission field, for example, there are fairly numerous records of conversions (though they are relatively rare) when apparently a real spiritual conversion to Christianity has taken place the very first time the Christian message has been presented. And certain of these conversions appear to occur, not, as one might expect, among those who have been earnestly seeking after truth and light, in their own religion or philosophy, but amongst the careless and indifferent. There was a classic example of the same kind of conversion when in response to a deliberate challenge from the scoffing, George Whitfield, at the beginning of his mission preaching, started work at the village of Kingswood, amongst a population sunk in indescribable grossness and ignorance, and Christian in nothing but name. An awakening took place at once accompanied by very numerous conversions in large numbers without any time for the preparation of the unconscious, assumed by the explosive theory of conversion.

Then again, there is another type of conversion when, as far as one can judge, two complexes form in the unconscious in conflict with each other, and the less likely of the two explodes into the conscious. The typical instance is that of the

drunkard discussed by James. His inclination to repentance and amendment always gathered in force during his weeks of drunken orgy, and appeared in strength the day the bout ceased. During the month of abstention which usually followed his week of orgy, his desire for drink gathered in strength till it exploded in another week of hard drinking. The favourable time for this man's conversion to take place would have been when his complex of religious impressions should have forced its way into his consciousness, helped and backed up by his desire for amendment, *i.e.* directly *after* one of his drunken bouts: as a matter of fact, his conversion took place after a month of abstention, *i.e.* at the most unfavourable moment, just when the complex of his desire for drink would have been likely to explode into consciousness, rather than his hitherto unexperienced desire after God.[1]

And there are many other records of a man's conversion to God taking place just at the moment when the whole force of his will, and his emotional nature is bent on the commission of some sin, *e.g.* the classical case of the conversion of Colonel Gardiner. We might compare the conversion of St Paul himself, which, whatever the unconscious

[1] Leuba, cited by William James, "The Varieties of Religious Experience." Longmans, 1904. Pp. 220 ff.

preparation for it, unquestionably took place when his will and his passions were directed with all their energy to the destruction of the Christian Church. In face of these and other such phenomena, William James admits the inadequacy of the explosion theory to explain all the facts, and says:

> "Candour obliges me to confess that there are occasional bursts into consciousness of results of which it is not easy to demonstrate any prolonged subconscious incubation. The case of Mr Bradley, that of M. Ratisbonne, possibly that of Colonel Gardiner, possibly that of St Paul might not be so easily explained in this simple way. The result then would have to be ascribed either to a merely physiological nerve storm, a 'discharging lesion' like that of epilepsy, or, in case it were useful and rational, as in the two latter cases named, to some more mystical or theological hypothesis."

Even the hypothesis of a nerve storm is in no way irreconcilable with the operation of the grace of God. What could be more parallel to a nerve storm psychologically than such a moral overturn as is implied in such conversions? It would seem that the phenomena of Christian experience, at least where conversions are concerned, present many unexpected features when compared with the course they should pursue according to the autosuggestion theory.

C. The Lasting Results of Christian Experience

The hysteria or mob psychology hypothesis, as to the origin of Christian experience as set forth in Chapter I., if true, should be confirmed by an immense body of evidence:—

(1) that a Christian community contains a very high proportion of hysterics.

(2) that the results of Christian experience are transient.

In the first place, hysterical persons, psychopathologists tell us, are always easily suggestible, so, if Christian experience be the result of suggestion, those who sow Christian suggestions will obviously reap their most abundant harvest in the field of hysteria. On this hypothesis, Christian experience would appear far more often in hysterical subjects than in other more normal persons. But does a fair study of even the average Christian, whatever his failings, mark him down as particularly hysterical?

In the second place, if Christian experience be usually the result of suggestion acting on hysterical subjects, it should be almost always evanescent, for, in spite of the fact that hysterics are always easily suggestible people, doctors tell us they are of all people the most difficult to cure by sug-

gestion, because its results are in their case so evanescent. Well-balanced people are far more easily cured through treatment by suggestion than are hysterics: soldiers and teachers as classes prove the best subjects. But is it fair to say that Christian experience is almost always evanescent?

It is an established psychological fact that time diminishes the result of suggestion, unless there is a constant fresh contact with the source of the suggestion. A child has just acquired a new brother, is told by the nursemaid that her mother won't love her any more: her whole world is blackened by the suggestion, but if the father promptly dismisses the source of the suggestion, and the child is exposed daily to the mother's loving words and deeds, time diminishes and finally blots out the evil results of suggestion. Christian experience, if the result of suggestion alone, should be unable to withstand the test of isolation, should be unable to flourish except in the forcing house of hypnotic influence. But the Christian's first experience of God's love for him does not pass away but remains, and that in spite of a constant daily exposure to the blighting suggestions of a cold and indifferent world.

But the results of Christian experience in the individual are not only lasting, they are growingly

influential, and tend to colour his whole life. A mere illusion is sometimes persistent, but its results are rarely manifested consistently in every part of its victim's life. A woman living with all her cherished possessions in one room suffers from the illusion that every night her neighbours enter the room and steal her goods. But next day, she sits on the stolen chairs and drinks out of the stolen cups with no sense of inconsistency. It is impossible to maintain that Christians never in life and conduct show inconsistency with their beliefs; but it *is* possible to point to many Christians so possessed by a great idea that it comes to affect their whole being, and that consistently. The Son of Thunder reproached for his revengeful spirit, and driven to seek the Spirit of His Master, becomes known at last as the Apostle of Love. Saint Paul gives us the clearest account a man ever gave of his dominating ambitions and passions before his conversion, but declares, "What things were gain to me, these things have I counted loss for Christ, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings," and all we know of him shows the perfect accord of his life with this assertion as to his changed ambition. And we ourselves know men and women to-day, whose former pursuit of wealth, fame, pleasure or

ease is practically forgotten, as, deprived of all these things, they follow after Christ and the interests of His Kingdom.

Conversions during revivals, if they are the fruit of the action of mob psychology only, acting chiefly on hysterical persons, should be practically always evanescent, but such conversions are admitted by Starbuck and other psychologists who have carefully studied them, to be by no means always transitory in their results. The action of mob psychology in the mechanism producing such conversions may, of course, be often undesirable, but that constitutes no proof that the results of that conversion will be passing.

> "The test of an emotion, a faith, or a truth, is *what it will survive:* and the strength of the central convictions of the Church is measured by the forces of disruption and decline they have resisted." [1]

From the time that the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake, down to the massacres in Adana, much of the Christian experience generated in times of religious excitement has stood the test of persecution and martyrdom, when every *suggestion* of self-interest, fear, love of family, and self-pre-

[1] T. R. Glover, "The Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society," p. 38.

servation, combined to discredit the experience and strangle the results.

Many a student's decision for service in the mission field is the result of a call which the volunteer believes himself to have heard at some conference, at some time when a whole audience has been stirred by deep corporate emotion. But the records of the missionary societies, years afterwards, show that the sense of call *endures*, and stands the test of isolation, drudgery and often disappointment in China, India, or Africa. It is the long grind uphill which tests the belief of the climber that it was worth while to set out.

> "This 'illusion' has not only nerved men and even tender women to face a cross of shame before the world, but has given them the higher courage and still higher patience needed for the obscure and hopeless toil of continual failure in the work which seemed appointed them." [1]

D. The Sane Results of Christian Experience

Christian experience is charged to hysteria or to the hysterical workings of mob psychology. Examine the charge in detail. What are the scientifically established characteristics and results of hysteria in the individual? Pose, insincerity, want

[1] Gwatkin, "The Knowledge of God." T. & T. Clark, 1907. Vol. i. p. 116.

of self-control, emotionalism—a list only too well confirmed by doctors. Now hysteria is an undoubted element in the character of some Christians (though the proportion of hysterics in the Christian community is certainly no greater than in the world at large), but can the results and characteristics of hysteria be fairly charged against the normal type of Christian character? The fruit of hysteria is emotionalism, self-centredness, pose, insincerity, lack of conscientiousness, lack of self-control. "The fruit of the Spirit is peace, long-suffering, kindness, faithfulness, self-control."

We, in company with St Paul, may be accused of painting an ideal Christian character; perhaps—but is it not at least fair to say that stability of character and truthfulness are not unusual Christian products? And can the self-control and sanity of Christian character reasonably be supposed to be the offspring of hysteria?

No religion, for example, ancient or modern, lays such stress on truthfulness as Christianity—it demands truthfulness not only in man's relations with his fellows, but also "in the inward parts," in man's relations with his own mind. Obscurantism reigns in some quarters of Christendom—alas, this cannot be denied—but where outside Christendom or the influence of Christianity, is to be found a religious man whose desire for truth-

fulness is so strong that he will risk the shipwreck of his religion and his religious life by critically inquiring into its foundations? Whenever a student says to himself:—"At all costs I must find out if Christianity be true," and faces for the sake of truth a possible eclipse of his faith, he is inspired by the Christian ideal of truthfulness. Every time a school of historical, textual, or scientific criticism arises within the Church, determined to examine her very foundations, and to be faithful, at all costs, to the truth, the Church is showing one of her distinctive characteristics. Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Hinduism, can show no parallel phenomenon, save where the indirect influence of Christianity has bred a spirit of free inquiry. Therein lies their weakness, while the Church survives the purging of her own spirit of truth, and comes forth from the ordeal purified and strengthened.

Again, to examine the workings of the psychology of the mob. "Is there any record apart from Christian history, *i.e.*, the history of Christian peoples influenced consciously or unconsciously by Christian background, training or tradition, of mob psychology working in favour of self-denial, or the progressive morality of the community?" That mob psychology in Christian peoples always works in favour of the progressive morality of

the community is, of course, impossible to maintain —witness certain phenomena of the Crusades, the massacre of the Jews in Russia, etc. But the Methodist revival in Great Britain, though accompanied by much excitement, and helped on by the action of mob psychology, changed the moral ideals of eighteenth century England, and made possible a hundred reform movements at home, and the modern missionary movement abroad. Again, Faneuil Hall in the United States, and Exeter Hall in Great Britain, though sometimes hysterical in their manifestations, abolished slavery in the United States and the slave trade in Africa, while their offshoots have gone some distance towards suppressing the white slave traffic. Outside Christian peoples, can such instances of progressive morality, favoured by the working of mob psychology, be produced ?

In advancing the sanity of Christian character as an argument against the autosuggestion theory, we shall unquestionably be reminded by our opponents of the erratic and morbid phenomena, which form part of the religious experience of not a few mystics and of some more ordinary Christians. The retort is an obvious and fair one, and must be considered impartially.

As regards the experience of the individual, all the great mystics, even those most favoured with

visions and miraculous experiences, agree in attaching but little importance to such phenomena, and in finding "the test of a true ecstasy not in its outward sign but in its inward grace, its after value." Their lives bear witness to their creed. But even if there are amongst them persons, and such there are, who have a craving for morbid phenomena, for wonderful and curious emotions, does this necessarily discredit the sanity of the essential element of their experience, their longing after communion with God, and their joy in that communion? "There is all the difference in the world between a healthy appetite for nourishing food and a morbid craving for garbage. The same organs of digestion are used in satisfying both, yet he would be a hardy psychologist who undertook to discredit all nutrition by reference to its degenerate forms." [1] Equally unreasonable would it be to discredit love because some forms of love are pathological.

Once more it must not be forgotten that if you undertake to discredit certain Christian experiences on the ground of the physical disturbances which accompany those experiences, we shall be forced on the same grounds to discredit the achievements of many a great artist, musician and savant. As Von Hügel says, "In such cases as Kant and

[1] Evelyn Underhill, "Mysticism," p. 70, 430, etc.

Beethoven, a classifier of humanity as to its psycho-physical phenomena alone would put those great discoverers without hesitation among hopeless and helpless hypochondriacs." "Genius, religious, artistic, or scientific, undoubtedly calls for such industry and strain of nerve as will find out any constitutional weakness." Yet fortunately, we have religious geniuses galore to quote, who see no spooks, and in whose case morbid phenomena are wholly absent. What of Brother Lawrence, Pascal, Livingstone, Moody, and many another?

Much, again, is made in controversy, of the morbid and eccentric phenomena which often accompany great spiritual awakenings, revivals, etc.—physical agony, shaking, tongues, seeing of brilliant lights, and some would include also tears, public confession of sin, crying out in prayer, terror, intense joy, etc. "If morbid conditions not infrequently attend the origin of religious conviction, their occurrence is natural enough in a trying time of moral unrest. Imagine a man brought face to face with the appalling fact which he never realised before, that God sees all his doings and sees them with displeasure! Or imagine him persuaded that God calls him to bear witness, and witness he must, of some terrible truth which may cost him not his life only, but the hatred of his country and his nearest friends! It is grim earnest, if anything

in life is earnest; and morbid conditions are not unlikely to accompany such a fearful strain of heart and soul and mind, till either the man settles down into the new life, or falls back into the old. Further evidence is needed to show, first that morbid conditions *originate* the new life; then that they *sustain* its later growth; and yet further evidence will still be needed to give us reasonable assurance that this is commonly the fact, before we can look on such conditions as more than a partial and therefore an insufficient cause. And there are many cases where such a cause can hardly be suggested." [1]

E. The Inhibitive Power of Christian Experience

It is a well-established fact that a subject in a hypnotic state "will accept suggestions from the operator only to a limited extent, varying according to the degree of hypnosis attained, and the susceptibility of the subject." "It is never possible to insist on an act which is contrary to the deep-seated instincts of the subject." All the more is this true when these instincts to be inhibited are the primary instincts of human nature, or the ingrained instincts of a race.

Yet, such is the inhibitive power of Christianity

[1] Gwatkin, "The Knowledge of God," vol. i. p. 120.

(supposed by our critics to produce its results by hypnotic or suggestive means), that it succeeds again and again, both in overcoming the most deeply-rooted habits, and also in inhibiting race instincts and even primary human instincts.

To take first the case of a deeply-rooted habit—hypnotic treatment is not unsuccessful in curing the drunkard, the victim of the drug habit, or of other vices. But how slow is its action, how difficult its application, when we compare the action of hypnotic treatment on the drunkard with the action of religious conversion, witness the records of the Salvation Army, or the Water Street Mission in New York. Here what is claimed by the Christian as the action of the Holy Spirit succeeds again and again in reclaiming the man whom every argument of self-interest, every impulse of love and tenderness, has failed to save from his vice. Is not another factor than suggestion at work in such miracles of inhibition, a factor which neither the hypnotist nor his willing subject can command ?

But race instincts lie deeper-rooted in human nature than the most powerful, personal habits, and are more difficult to overcome. Can Christian experience inhibit the action of such instincts, the result of many centuries of training and heredity ? Caste and race pride die hard. The

Brahmin in India believes that the very shadow of a low caste man defiles him : the Parsi knows that the touch of a sweeper condemns him to many weary days of purification rites : the Hindu and the Mohammedan are heirs to centuries of hatred. Yet in India to-day, Brahmin and outcaste, Parsi and sweeper, Hindu, Mohammedan, when once they have come to acknowledge Christ, may be seen Sunday by Sunday kneeling side by side, eating the same bread and drinking from the same cup at the Table of the Lord ; and it should be noted that this test of willingness to eat together is not proposed to them after years of Christian training, but is the very first test of their new allegiance presented to them, and accepted by them.

The Baganda for ages past have exposed the dying and the diseased, believing them possessed by evil spirits and dangerous to the living and the healthy. The Christians in Uganda not only tend their sick with loving care, but volunteered to nurse the victims of sleeping sickness, even when that disease was not only known to be highly contagious, but was believed to be always fatal.

Equally contrary to deep-rooted instincts is the clear-cut demand of the Christian ethic, " love your enemies," " forgive your enemies," " pray for them that despitefully use you." Revenge, especially revenge for the murder of a near

relative, is regarded in many primitive communities as the most sacred of all duties. In the islands of the Sea, among the cannibal tribes, Christians have again and again been known to give the hand of forgiveness and to share the Communion with those who have slain *and eaten* their near relatives. Even in Adana there are Armenian Christians to-day, who, though they lost all in the massacres, pray for the Turks and seek to win them for Christ.

Deeper even than race instincts lie the primary instincts of human nature. Self-preservation is one of these. Christianity is not the only religion, nor faith in Christ the only cause, which has had this power to inhibit this primary instinct to the point even of martyrdom; but is there any other faith which in like manner through the centuries, from the time of the Neronian persecutions to the time of the Boxer troubles in China, has produced a succession of men and women who "held not their lives of any account as dear unto themselves," and who quietly and gladly laid down those lives for the sake of Another? The most characteristic fruit of Christian experience is that "love which casteth out fear." Christianity is a religion of fearlessness, trust and joy—at least, those are its most distinctive marks.

In view of this, the accounts given of the

origin of religion and religions by those who hold all developments, even the highest in religion to be the product of autosuggestion, read strangely enough. Primitive and animistic religion is unquestionably largely the product of the instinct of fear and the instinct of self-preservation. The animistic heathen is the slave of fear. Christianity is for the animist first and foremost, by universal testimony of converts and missionaries, a *deliverance*, a deliverance from the bondage of fear, fear of a multitude of evil spirits. The convert from heathenism lifts up his head and walks the world as a free man. This transformation from fear to fearlessness takes place in many an animist brought into contact with Christ in a few months.[1] If the highest as well as the lowest form of religion be but the product of autosuggestion, how comes it that within a few months or less, in the case of the modern convert, the primary instinct of fear is so completely inhibited, and the autosuggestions which result from it so completely superseded by autosuggestions entirely contrary to it.

Again, to turn from the present day conversion of the individual to the historical development

[1] For instances *cf.* Warneck "The Living Forces of the Gospel" (Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier) in the section, pp. 232-250, part iii.

of the religion, if the highest religion be but the outcome of the lowest religion by a continued process of autosuggestion on the part of man himself, without the intervention of any other factor, how is it that a religion entirely based on fear has become a religion of fearlessness and joy and trust? Why and how this upward tendency, this paralysis of one set of autosuggestions in favour of an entirely contrary set? If both fear and fearlessness are equally the product of autosuggestion, why the triumph of fearlessness, the triumph of the autosuggestion which must inhibit one of the primary instincts of human nature, rather than the triumph of that autosuggestion which acts in favour of that primary instinct? "How can one enter into the house of a strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house?" (Matt. xii. 29). The autosuggestion of fearlessness appears here as the stronger man, binding the strong. Yet by all psychological law, the autosuggestion of fear should be the stronger man, unless some factor other than autosuggestion is at work on the side of fearlessness. Surely the power of Christian experience to inhibit the action even of primary instincts of human nature is an indication that a more than human element is present in it. "How can Satan drive out Satan?" How can auto-

suggestion drive out autosuggestion? "A house divided against itself cannot stand." An enthusiasm which burns up dross cannot be of the earth earthy.

Let us pass on to the dynamic force of Christian experience, recognising by the way that it is by no means easy, and fortunately quite unnecessary, to draw a distinct line between the inhibitive and the dynamic effects of Christian experience. When rowing up a swift flowing river, our thought of what we are accomplishing will vary according as we dwell on the distance rowed or on the strength of the current rowed against. So in considering Christian experience, its inhibitive effects will be more vivid to us as we consider the forces overcome, its dynamic effects, as we consider the work accomplished.

F. The Dynamic Force of Christian Experience

The supreme distinction of Christian experience is its dynamic force, both in the individual and in history. Christianity is *the* religion of power. Accused of being a mere illusion, the product of autosuggestion, it rebuts the charge at once by producing evidence of its claim to *generate power*. In vindicating that claim, Christianity proposes no unusual or peculiar test, but merely asks that

in the sphere of religion the same test be applied in distinguishing between illusion and true perception as would naturally be applied in the world of sense. What is this test ?

It is not to be found in any difference in the mechanism which produces illusion and true perception. The test lies rather in the region of resultant power. " Perception . . . reveals itself as power-generating : it is born of our reacting against forces which in turn react on us ; true perception nourishes rather than exhausts us. . . . Illusion, on the other hand, only exhausts our forces : it is a sterile and powerless adaptation to an artificial environment. When subject to illusion, we evolve apart from the healthy and nourishing influence and action of reality, and although we may seem for a moment to succeed in creating something, we are finally conquered by that determinism of things which can not be violated with impunity." [1] All psycho-pathologists point out that neuropaths are weak and powerless ; they are in a state of psychological destitution, even when they seem to be rising above the normal. In the end of the day they slump and exhibit their inferiority.

" Similarly, in the world of religious phenomena, there are true religious perceptions and religious

[1] Henri Bois, " La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse," p. 43.

illusions. The physiologist and the psychologist can point to no difference in the mechanism which produces them ; but the former are true, the latter false. There are religious experiences which have all the distinctive marks of illusion. What the religious subject thinks he sees is all drawn from his own store. On the other hand, there are religious experiences which show themselves as spiritual forces of remarkable content and power, producing a lasting and growingly rich life, putting an end to inner strife, and endowing the subject with virtues he could never have acquired himself. Such religious experiences are analogous with perception in the physical world in their power generating quality." [1]

" When a thing is capable of giving ever more and more, the greater demands we make upon it, when it is a source that never dries up, ought it not to be judged real ? "

The history of the Church is the laboratory where we can test Christian experience for the marks of reality, where we can determine whether it be an illusion or a true religious perception, by testing its power-generating quality. Let us take first the case of the Christian individual. To him the test has indeed already been applied, both by our opponents and ourselves, for only those thought

[1] Henri Bois, " La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse," p. 43.

it worth while to embark on this investigation with us who believe that Christianity does make a man capable of what he certainly would have been incapable in his own strength alone.

Christianity does transform character. Thomas, the persistent doubter, becomes full of faith; Peter, the coward, faces persecution, danger, and death without fear; Paul, the proud, acknowledges himself less than the least; Augustine, the slave of vice, masters himself; Carey, the cobbler, becomes the missionary pioneer and Orientalist. And we to-day see around us the wavering becoming decided, the shallow deepened, the shy and sensitive bravely witnessing to their faith, the snobbish and exclusive becoming friendly and large-hearted, the dull of intellect quickened and stimulated—everywhere, men and women who somehow or other from somewhere or other have gained a power to be what by nature they cannot be, and do what by nature they cannot do. These results of Christian experience, showing its dynamic force to transform character, are the tests of its reality. Some will, of course, attempt to discredit these tests by discrediting, not the results of the experience, but its emotional accompaniments, and when Christians declare the God-given reality of some spiritual exaltation which has led them to power and holiness, will say :—" A mere hypothesis

—for the mental clinic teaches us that general paralytics experience mystic joy, and that certain hysterics have the delirium of moral scruple." As well might a philosopher say "there are men who to explain their sense perceptions assume the real existence of the external world. A mere hypothesis—for psychology teaches us that there are hallucinations psychologically absolutely parallel to perceptions, and which have no corresponding external cause to excite them."[1]

But Christian experience not only generates power in the individual: those who experience it in their turn generate power in the community. An illusion may temporarily produce great results in its subject: but an illusion is without permanent power to unite men, without power to spread and propagate continuously. But Christian belief, if it be an illusion, is shown by the whole history of the Church to be above all things a uniting and propagating force. "This illusion has been the great nation-making, nation-binding, nation-breaking force in history."[2] A handful of uneducated fishermen, possessed by the conviction that they are filled with the life of Another, within a few years are known, even by their hostile critics, as the "men who have

[1] Henri Bois, "La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse," p. 47.
[2] Gwatkin, "Knowledge of God," vol. i. p. 116.

turned the world upside down." These men and their immediate disciples, with but one scholar amongst them, produced the literature of the New Testament, a literature which brought about the greatest intellectual, as well as spiritual, revolution which the world has ever seen, and which has for twenty centuries proved itself as beyond all things power-generating. Christian belief and Christian experience have revolutionised the ideals of civilised men in fundamental particulars—compare the ideals of even the best of the ancients on the subject of women, or again, of the child, the slave, the weak, and the sick, with the ideal of even the average civilised man to-day. And the power of the Christian faith to change ideals is shown not only in the slow evolution of the centuries, but in national transformations within a generation or so. A short forty years sufficed to produce, in the midst of that sink of moral degradation and obliquity, the Roman world, as shown in classical literature, whole communities dominated by the wonderful ideal of purity, victory, and joy which we see in the picture of Christian life given in St Paul's Epistles. We have a modern parallel in China, where, after one hundred years of missions, a nation may be seen, not indeed Christian as yet, but governed by men profoundly influenced by Christian ideals, and guiding the reconstruction

of the nation along the lines of Christian ethics. In the history of modern missions in Tierra del Fuego, in New Zealand, and in Uganda, there are to be seen transformations no less wonderful, and of far completer national extent.

These mighty changes are wrought by the regenerated individual generating power in the community. Great Christians are the dynamos of society. "They weather storms and endure conflicts which would overwhelm souls whose anchor did not reach beyond the veil. They have led great reforms and championed movements of great moment to humanity. They have been spiritual leaders: *they are the persons who shifted the levels of life for the race.*" [1] St Francis profoundly moved his Italy: Wesley changed the moral level of his England: Wilberforce and Livingstone changed their Africa: and Moody and Drummond produced a new younger generation in America and Britain.

But in seeking to illustrate the power-generating force of Christian experience, we are landed in the same difficulty as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he says at the end of his great catalogue of the mighty deeds of faith, "Time will fail me if I tell of those who through faith

[1] Rufus M. Jones, "Studies in Christian Mysticism," Intr. p. xxx.

subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises . . . from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight the army of aliens." These things are so much the commonplace of the history of the Church that a fresh presentation is absolutely impossible. What is necessary is not so much to illustrate the dynamic power of Christian experience as to grasp it in its wonder and significance, and moreover to see it clear and distinct, separated from all the emotional phenomena, normal or abnormal, which accompany Christian experience, and about which we are so prone to argue. As Rufus Jones says :— " The significant fact (of Christian experience) is not the sense of expansion or of freedom or of joy. It is not something merely subjective. It is that such experiences minister to life, construct personality, and conduce to the increased power of the race—*energy to live by actually does come to them from somewhere. The universe backs the experience.*" [1]

If the most characteristic mark of Christian experience be its power-generating quality, and if the most characteristic power of illusion be its lack of that quality, how then can Christian experience be an illusion ? If it be an illusion, it is

[1] Rufus M. Jones, " Studies in Christian Mysticism," Intr. p. xxx.

the greatest illusion in human history; why should the greatest of all illusions be so wholly without illusion's chief stamp, ineffectiveness, and bear the characteristic brand of true perception, dynamic power?

At this point, we are almost bound to be brought face to face with a certain accusation. Having dwelt at length on the sane results of Christian experience, its power to inhibit from evil, its power to provoke to good, unless our plea be followed very carefully, we shall be branded as pragmatists, and accused of defending our choice of a faith, and recommending its choice to others, on the ground of its extraordinarily beneficial results to humanity. An outcry will be raised against us by the intellectually or morally sensitive, by all who are valiant for the truth, and are shocked by the suspicion of utilitarianism in any plea connected with religion.

But those who raise this outcry misunderstand our plea. We do not contend that there must be an objective reality behind Christian experience, because it is so extraordinarily beneficial to humanity, but that the only conceivable cause of its extreme usefulness is an objective reality behind it. Our position is not, "It is true because it is useful," but, "It is useful because it is true."

In taking this position we are casting empiricism aside, and boldly taking our stand on a principle, namely, that truth alone can give freedom and power. Taking this principle as fundamental, we search the universe to see what does give freedom and power. We discover Christian experience to be the most liberating and power-producing force known, and confidently assert that there must be truth behind it. In so doing, we are contending for a rational universe and for the possibility of rational thought : we are pleading the cause of reason and truth.

If religion be an illusion, and yet gives man his highest development, and lifts him above himself, then we must crown a lie and dethrone reason. A universe so hopelessly perverse as to produce such results from delusion or lies is a universe where human thought is paralyzed, a region of moral and intellectual chaos. Our so-called " pragmatism " resolves itself into a demand for a reasonable universe.

V

THE SOURCE OF THE EXPERIENCE —WHAT IS IT?

Let us pass to the second question we wished to examine.

What light is thrown on the question of whether there is an objective reality behind Christian experience by an examination of the *source* of that experience?

In examining the source of Christian, or indeed any other experience, in the light of the autosuggestion theory, two principles must be kept in view.

(a) *There is no such thing as absolute autosuggestion with no connection whatever with anything exterior to the subject.*

The autosuggestion theory would seem to imply that it is possible for a man to evolve Christian experience out of the depths of his mental being, and out of those alone, but surely no man ever suggests an experience to himself apart from some previous idea causing him to think that experience possible. Can it be maintained that a man in

the extremest sense ever really *auto*-suggests? In the last analysis, " can there be autosuggestion without reference to external facts with which the mind of the person is more or less acquainted —in other words, has the idea to be *suggested* to the *autos*, or does the *autos suggest* it to itself. Which way does evidence point? " A man suggests to himself that he is catching cold because he imagines wrongly that the window behind him is open and that he feels a draught. But he would never have suggested the cold to himself had there not been in his mind beforehand the materials which he used in his autosuggestion, the ideas of an open window, a draught and a cold, and the idea of an intimate relation of cause and effect between them.

It is the same in the case of illusions produced by drugs or in the dream state. A victim of the mescal habit sees blue kangaroos. A blue kangaroo is conceivably, a wholly original conception of his brain—but the idea of blueness, and the idea of kangaroo, are ordinary notions imparted to the mescal victim in the nursery or the kindergarten. It is only the weird combination which is the result of the drug.

A man may suggest the emotion of patriotism to himself. He could not do so, unless certain conceptions of his country's worth were already

in his mind. Christian experience may be the result of autosuggestion, but no one would even suggest it to himself without some previous knowledge, however slight, of the Founder of Christianity.

So with regard to every emotional experience, sublime, ridiculous, or indifferent: it is always found to be connected with an idea, or ideas, derived from some external source.

(b) *The worth of an experience depends on the inherent worth of the idea which produces the autosuggestion leading to the experience.*

With regard to the blue kangaroo, there is no inherent worth in the idea of blueness or the idea of kangaroo, and certainly none in their combination. The worth of the emotion of patriotism depends on the inherent worth of loyalty, as a constituent in human society.

Christian experience, as we have already freely admitted, is often led up to by the ideas of goodness, forgiveness, peace, communion with God, imparted perhaps in childhood, and very likely suggested or autosuggested. There is inherent moral worth in the idea of goodness, suggested to us in the New Testament, and this is admitted by Christians and non-Christians alike to explain the worth of Christian experience.

This remains true, even when it can be de-

monstrated that the Christian has a vague or inaccurate idea of the source of that experience. No misapprehension on the part of the subject as to the immediate source of his experience necessarily renders the experience worthless provided it has its ultimate source in an idea of inherent worth. Rudyard Kipling tells of a tale of a man who leaves off drink for the sake of a woman in whose goodness he believes, though that goodness was only too far from having any objective reality. But even if the woman were undesirable, and the idea of her goodness was a hallucination, the idea of womanly goodness which was the real cause of his victory was no hallucination, and had its source not in his delusion about this woman, but in the objective reality he had seen in mother, sister, or heard of in some heroine of history. The unillumined Christian may declare the source of his victory, power, or joy, to be in some ceremony or place: the more enlightened may hold this to be a superstition and see the source in the idea of the power of Christ which really, even if unconsciously, dominates his friend. But victory, power, and joy are not to be discounted because their possessor partially mistakes their source.

If the worth of an experience depends on the inherent worth of the idea which gave rise to the experience, we are face to face with an imperative

need to examine the worth of the sources of Christian experience.

What are these sources? Our opponents tell us that Christian experiences are suggested by the Christian to himself because of the strength of his desire for such experiences. They worship the Christian God because He gives them what they want so intensely—peace, joy, and power.

"Whatever vitality remains in the belief in the Christian God proceeds from the gratification it provides for affective and moral needs. There are millions who say, 'It seems to me undeniable that that notion (a personal God), although altogether too human to be properly attributed to God, has a deep meaning, a moral significance, a religious value, that no other term possesses,' and consequently they choose to think of God as a person. It is precisely because no other form of available belief satisfies so easily and so completely certain urgent needs of the human heart, that the idea of God the Father remains amongst us." [1]

Whatever one may think of the insight into religious processes, shown by the naive attribution of such reasoning as the above to "millions," this passage *does* sum up the kind of reasoning used by a certain class of psychologists to

[1] Leuba, "A Psychological Study of Religion," p. 266.

account for Christian experience. But in explaining man's motives in seeking Christian experience it leaves out of sight completely the historic source of that experience. Unquestionably his desire for peace, joy, deliverance from weakness and sin, act powerfully in the direction of driving a man to seek Christian experience. But what causes him to conceive the idea that his desires will be fulfilled in this particular direction? An auto-suggestionist he may be, but what idea impels him to suggest specifically Christian experience to himself! Surely not only his desire to have his needs fulfilled, but also his knowledge that in the experience of others these particular needs have been fulfilled in a particular direction, *i.e.* in Christ. Otherwise why does he not chance on the peace to be found in Buddhism, or "Higher Thought," or in the power to be found in Islam.

A man does not believe in the Fatherhood of God merely because it comforts him, but also because Christ taught that God is Father. He does not believe that his sins are forgiven merely because it makes him happy, but because he sees that Christ forgives sins. We must distinguish between the motives which drive men to seek Christian experience, and the source of that experience. A study of the history of Christian conversion of every type will show, in general,

three varieties of motive which may impel men to autosuggest Christian experience, but will show but one ultimate source of that experience, viz. the historic Christ.

1. The motive leading to a man's conversion may be the hope of some sorely needed deliverance from sin or weakness; but the source of his idea that deliverance could be found in Christ, is the sight of Christ as Redeemer in the lives of others, or in the records of the New Testament.

2. The motive of a man's conversion may be his desire for perfection or self-improvement; but the source of his experience is the sight of the superiority of the Christian ethic as it works out in the lives of other men, or the sight of Christ as Example, or knowledge and appreciation of His moral teaching.

3. A man may become a Christian impelled by a desire for service, but the source of his new resolves is the knowledge of the beneficial social effects of Christianity, or the sight of Christ as leader in the world's regeneration.

All these various desires, self-regarding or altruistic, may cause a man to suggest Christian experience to himself, but they do not explain his experience until the source is discovered whence he drew the idea that such experience was possible, and that source is always ultimately

the historic Christ. It has been said that "Religion without history is a nervous disease," but the Christian religion at any rate can never be "without history," for the experience of Christians is always rooted in the history of the Church, and ultimately in the history of Christ Himself.

Christian experience, of course, has very frequently a proximate as well as an ultimate source. The proximate source of Christian experience is contact with another personality, instruction, persuasion—if you will—*suggestion* by some other Christian—father, preacher, friend, teacher, whether living now or known in history. Even the Scriptures or other Christian writings are after all only the means by which we are brought into contact with Christian personality.

> "In general Christian conviction is apt to begin in contact with Christian character. *The blessing comes from a higher source, but the broken bread is given by human hands.* If we study the history of the Church aright, we find that behind each one of us there reaches a long nexus of personality, each link in the chain a Christian man or woman, until we find ourselves abreast of the first disciples in the presence of their Master. Indeed, if we reflect how many Christian characters have contributed their influence to the growth and development of the Christian life in each one of us, we shall find, if we trace what might be called our Christian pedigree, that we are connected with Jesus Christ by a

good many lines of descent, and that these cross and recross amazingly. *This great complex of relations is the Church.*" [1]

Here we see Christian experience having its proximate source in the suggestion of another Christian personality or through contact with the Church, but ultimately by a spiritual genealogy short or long, through contact with Jesus Christ Himself.

In maintaining this view of the source of Christian experience, true as it is, we are not, of course, giving what is for *us*, as Christians, a complete account of the genesis of Christian experience. The Christian, of course, claims much more than this. He claims that his connection with his Lord is immediate and not merely mediated through a long or short genealogy of Christian personalities. To pass from Colon to Panama a long sea voyage was needed, or a most toilsome, if shorter, land journey, both exceedingly expensive. For years engineers have toiled to bring the Atlantic and the Pacific together. At length, by the pressure of an electric button, the Culebra Dam is blown up and in a moment Atlantic and Pacific are one. So, the Christian by long toil, research, and seeking may and does

[1] T. R. Glover, " Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society," p. 28.

attain a mediated experience of Christ, but at length, as in a moment by a touch, that mediated experience becomes immediate and he finds himself in the presence of Christ.

But let us lay aside this claim just now, our present concern is only to establish that the ultimate source of Christian experience is Christ, the picture of His character, His teaching, or the impression made by the picture of His whole personality given us in the Gospels; in other words the ultimate source of Christian experience is the religious experience of Jesus Christ Himself.

VI

THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR LORD

If the worth of an experience depends on the inherent worth of the source which produces that experience it thus becomes of supreme importance to examine the inherent worth of the religious experience of Jesus, since by it will be determined the worth of our own religious experience. And when we speak of the worth of that religious experience which is the cause of all our own, we shall be content with no evidence of its worth which does not include the evidence of its truth, of its correspondence to an objective reality. We could not tolerate the thought that the source of all that is highest and best in us is based itself on illusion and unreality. It is no mere theoretic interest then, but the deepest moral concern to us, whether the experience of Jesus Christ Himself can be explained on the autosuggestion theory: or whether there remains that in His experience, which autosuggestion fails to account for, but which can be accounted for easily on the hypothesis that the peculiar relationship in which

He believed Himself to stand to God was an actuality.

Here let us note the limits of our examination. We are not bound to consider *here* every possible theory accounting for the extraordinary character of the experience of Jesus Christ and His influence in history, but only the autosuggestion theory.

The autosuggestion theory proposes a particular explanation of the phenomena of religious consciousness. It is bound to apply its theories to the consciousness of Christ as of all others, and to view Him as the greatest of all autosuggestionists. It must maintain that the phenomena of His consciousness are suggestions emanating from Himself on an inadequate rational basis. Is this an adequate explanation of facts? This theory must be pursued consistently, and with full recognition that its adoption rules out certain other current explanations of the influence of Jesus, or current attitudes towards Him. It is not open to, for instance, the holder of the autosuggestion theory to maintain that the explanation of His consciousness is a special measure of God's spirit, a gift given to us all, only possessed by Christ in a peculiar degree. This admits the possibility of the action of God on the human soul, the very claim attacked, and must be ruled out.

Let us examine certain features of the religious experience of Jesus, and see if there be not in them an "unexplained residue" incomprehensible on the autosuggestion hypothesis.

A. Certain Elements in His Messianic Consciousness

Driven to search for the source of the actual religious experience of Jesus Himself, the upholder of the autosuggestion theory will most naturally turn to Jewish religious history, and will account for the peculiar religious experience of Jesus as the experience of a genius, who sums up in himself the consciousness of his race, suggests to himself the national genius in a transcendent form. There is much in the life of Jesus to provoke this line of thought. Jesus Himself dwelt on the fact that He fulfilled the history of His nation, and it is easy enough to trace the close connection between the Messianic visions and ideals of the Old Testament and the human development of His thought of Himself as the Christ.

But are there not elements in His consciousness of Himself, and even in His Messianic consciousness, that are original, and which, far from being drawn from the Messianic expectations of His people, disappointed and ran contrary to these expectations, even in their highest form?

"If Jesus had simply taken up the Messianic ideal of Israel, and had His purpose not ranged beyond the spiritual horizon of the Jewish people, then His character as Messiah would have displayed no feature worthy of special note. For it is quite possible to imagine that among a people whose religion formed so large a part of their life a highly gifted man might fancy himself called upon to realise the certain goal for which all were ardently longing. But on close inspection the will of Jesus is seen to be by no means the mere blossom of the Jewish hope for a Messiah. In the work that He undertook, He rose above all that Israel had looked upon and hoped for as the highest good, and He was quite conscious that He was disappointing the hopes He aroused. Jesus certainly claimed, as was expected of the Messiah, that He would establish the Kingdom of God among men, and that He would thereby make the world complete. But there is no trace of political hopes, no summons to the use of force. The decisions to which He compels men concern their own inner life; for by the Kingdom of God He means God's true lordship over personal life, especially in men's own souls, and in their communion one with another." [1]

Discovery and acknowledgment of His claim for Himself came, not from those who had been brooding longest on the significance of their people's literature and history—but from the

[1] Herrmann, "The Communion of the Christian with God," pp. 86, 87.

unlearned few; who had been carefully and laboriously drawn onwards, through their daily contact with His personality.

B. The Universality of His Thought

In the *universality of His thought*, again, He was completely apart from the religious consciousness of His people. He a Jew, born and bred in the narrow circle of Jewish village life, calmly and quietly proposed a moral revolution of the whole world, set before Himself a scheme which embraced every nation and every age. Here He ran dead contrary to the instincts of His nation. True, some of the Jewish prophets looked far beyond the limits of their race for the mission of their people, but even their thought was always centripetal. The nations are to be drawn to Zion, and to bring in their gifts to lay at the feet of a Jewish king. When Jesus, on the other hand, proposes that the good news about Himself should be spread throughout the world and that He should draw all men to Himself " one flock with one shepherd," He is proposing a plan as far beyond the widest thought of His people, and as revolutionary, as when He issues the command, " Resist not him that is evil," as the fulfilment of the Mosaic command, " An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

His universality of thought, His whole con-

ception of the mission and significance of the Messiah, contain many elements that could scarcely have been suggested by the religious history and thought of His people, and cannot possibly be regarded as the fruit of race consciousness.

C. His Sanity and Balance

Was then Christ self-deceived—unconsciously of course—none would dare to bring the charge of deliberate imposture against Him? Did He evolve from His inner consciousness, with *no* adequate rational basis, this conception of His own relationship to God, which dominated all His thought and all His work and aims, and which yet ran dead contrary to all the race consciousness of His people? Were the most remarkable features of His inner life an illusion? Were His claims for Himself a gigantic case of hysteria? All these charges, which are but variations of the autosuggestion theory, have been brought against His conception of Himself. Those who hold such theories are surely hard put to it to explain one feature of His character, its extraordinary sanity and balance. As Speer says:—[1]

> "In Him all virtues were correlated. No one overbalanced its correlative or was pushed to extremity of exaggeration. 'He joined,' as

[1] Robert Speer, "The Man Jesus Christ," pp. 119-124.

Channing says, 'strong feeling with self-possession, an indignant sensibility to sin and compassion for the sinner, an intense devotion to His work and calmness under opposition and ill success, a universal philanthropy and a susceptibility to private attachments, the authority which became the Saviour of the world and the tenderness and gratitude of a son.'

"This balance of character Jesus showed not less in His teaching than in His conduct. . . . As teacher Jesus was tender, yet searching. He won the hearts of men by His kindly sympathy and humanity, while He probes to the quick their moral sores. He is uniformly calm, yet moved by the fire of repressed passion. He is stern, yet not unloving, and resolute without sacrificing the elasticity of His sympathy, and genial without condescending to be the weakly accomplice of moral mischief and weakness. He pursues and exposes the latent evil of the human heart through all the mazes of its unrivalled deceitfulness without sullying His own purity, and without forfeiting the strong belief in the present capacity of every human being for goodness. He knows what is in man, and yet, with this knowledge, not only does not despair of humanity, but respects it and enthusiastically loves it."

If Christ's thought of His own person were merely autosuggestion, and if there were no objective reality behind it, then it was the most colossal of all illusions, and His life should have produced illusion's most characteristic fruits. In a severe

case of disease, there are always well marked symptoms. Where are the symptoms of hysteria and illusion in the life of Christ, if His character is as outlined above? So colossal an illusion as His should have produced a colossal disjointedness in His thought and in His relation to His fellow-men, instead of a sanity and balance so perfect that friend and foe, His fellow-countrymen and foreigners, and even the indifferent, were drawn to acknowledge it. Hear their tributes, "He speaketh with authority and not as the scribes"; "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" "He told me all that ever I did"; "This man hath done nothing amiss"; "I find no fault in Him"—wisdom, insight, an educated mind, righteousness, authority.

The only charge of madness ever brought against Him was brought by those who loved Him and feared He would risk His life. The charge of demon possession He met once and for all, and effectively, by just the argument we seek to use here, His perfect sanity, His control over the turbulent and chaotic elements of human nature, His power to cast out demons (Matt. xii. 24-28).

The theory of autosuggestion as explaining the experience of Jesus is in its essence a charge of illusion. Either He spoke from Himself, or the Father spoke to Him and through Him. Yet He

was free from all the characteristics of the man with an *Idée fixe*. Many a monomaniac is possessed by an idea essentially true and righteous, and is yet unbalanced by the onesidedness with which his *true* idea possesses him. Jesus, *ex hypothesi*, was possessed by an *untrue* idea, and is yet essentially balanced.

D. His Matchless Endurance

Courage and endurance are as remarkable in the experience of Jesus Christ as His sanity and balance. His peculiar conception of His person and work drew upon Him the hatred of His people, and incurred His own overthrow. Moreover, He knew that it would do so, and performed His task in face of certain death, and died confident that He had won the victory. What can account for the "remarkable assurance He maintained over against the opposition of the world and in His death?" Why did He regard His work as bound to succeed and stake His life on it? Was it the result of hysteria? Why then this steadfastness to the end, this marvellous self-control which kept Him absolutely confident, yet calm, quiet, natural, and humble throughout? Humility, calmness, and self-control are the last characteristics to be found in hysteria. And why the extraordinary difficulty which even those most opposed to His claims find

in charging Him with insincerity? Insincerity and pose are always found in the hysteric; but the claims of Jesus seem so integral and natural a part of His whole being.

Was His calm and enduring confidence the result of autosuggestion? Had it no adequate rational basis? If so, one of two results of His illusion would surely have made itself evident. Either He would have clung to His illusion, and His life could have been thrown out of gear, and disintegrated in intense mental distress and confusion as He discovered that His universe did not "back His experience." But nothing of this kind occurs: His confidence in His mission and in His Father remains absolutely unimpaired; His Agony and Bloody Sweat are not embittered by even the faintest doubt; their pangs are for the world, not for Himself or His vanishing mission or trust.

Or if His original confidence in His peculiar mission and sonship were mere autosuggestion, and His life nevertheless not thrown out of gear, a modification of His convictions and His claims would have been inevitable. No suggestion or autosuggestion has lasting influence unless it is constantly renewed, and the confidence of Jesus, unless constantly revived and encouraged by His surroundings, would certainly have undergone

change and modification. The saints of His nation did not recognise Him, the rulers of His nation hounded Him down; the whole civil power was arrayed against Him, even His brethren did not believe on Him. His disciples misunderstood Him again and again, and even rebuked His deepest thought of Himself. Everything in His environment combined to suggest to Him change or modification or adaptation of His claims in the very interests of the carrying out of His purpose, but throughout His ministry He neither wavered nor modified, and at the very last, face to face with death, His assertion of His mission and person is more calm, more confident than ever.

Deeper and more Fundamental Features of His Experience

The sanity and balance of the character of Jesus, His matchless confidence and endurance, His universalism, His original conception of His mission, as well as much else in His character and experience, as depicted in the Gospels, are hard to account for on the autosuggestion theory. But we must go deeper in our study: till now we have not touched Him in the deepest and most distinctive parts of His experience. Let us pass from the threshold to the inner room—away from those character-

istics in which He summons us to follow Him, those experiences which, in some measure, we may share with Him, to those distinctive parts of His experience which, in spite of the fulness of His humanity, He does not share with us. What were those experiences, and where is their source to be found ?

E. His Consciousness of Sinlessness

Jesus lifts up for us the highest conceivable moral standard, and lives the life of one conscious of no inferiority to His own ideal. He demands that we should live according to the law of love, and so lives that He compels us to acknowledge that He never falls below this standard. Nothing is more difficult to account for psychologically than this conviction of our Lord's that He was sinless, unless we adopt the theory that the apostles have presented us with a false picture ; in which case we are face to face with the even greater difficulty of accounting for their production of this convincing portrait of a Sinless One, such a one as they had never known, and whose experience was so totally unlike that of sinful and weak men like themselves.

> " In affirming His sinlessness the apostles cannot have been at war with their recollections of His life, ' suppressing defects in His character

which they had observed or acknowledgments of short-comings made by Himself.'

"The Synoptics certainly record no explicit claim to moral purity on Jesus' part—nothing so direct as the question, 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?' (John viii. 46.) But neither do they anywhere eulogise Him or attempt to prove His innocence; they offer simply a plain tale of His words and works. Various minor traits of bearing and conduct, however, reveal undeniably His own conviction. When we recollect that His mission opened with a call to repentance, that He condemned 'the righteous' unsparingly, that He urged personal confession on His followers, yet He was Himself a stranger to the language of contrition, we can explain this only by the supposition that He reckoned Himself inwardly pure. This absence from the mature mind of Jesus of any consciousness that sin had tainted Him is really the decisive fact. He stood without fear or shame in the light of God. There is no trace of healed scars, no memories of defeat. He was no penitent, like St Paul or St Augustine, nor does He confess sin when He is dying. Men may of course be sinful unawares, but not such men as Jesus. The intense moral pain that vibrates in His rebuke of Peter (Matt. xvi. 23), implies an exquisite sensitiveness to the presence of evil. Not only so; as Goguel has remarked, a personality of this depth and ethical intensity, had He felt consciousness of sin in even the slightest degree, would have been overwhelmed by feelings of poignant and consuming grief. Further, in view of the obligation resting on Him to dispel erroneous impressions, His persistent silence would have been the

last hypocrisy. Finally, on every page of the Gospels, we encounter such imperial demands for obedience, as well as gracious promises of help and pardon, as would have been an enormity for a sinful man to utter." [1]

Add to this the record of Jesus' words at the time of the Last Supper. He was confronted with a death whose horror He felt keenly, and yet, "in that hour when the conscience of every man who is morally alive inexorably sums up his life," He not only shows not the faintest trace of penitence for sin or sorrow for short-coming, but is able to look right away from Himself, and point to the death He was about to die, as availing to take the burden of guilt and sin from others. He was concerned with the sins of others, not in the least with His own.

Whence this extraordinary consciousness of rising to His own ideal? The Scriptures of His people supplied many a record of the deepest consciousness of sin and guilt ever felt by the men of any nation, but no picture of a Sinless One. Those of His contemporaries who were conscious of their own righteousness provoked His condemnation; with them He felt no kinship, and from them would have accepted no suggestion. Never can He have met anyone whose life or

[1] Mackintosh, "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ," p. 35 f.

teaching suggested the possibility of a life of perfect love.

Yet so wonderful is the consistency of the portrait given in the Gospels, that none feel revolted when the words are put into His mouth, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Is there any explanation of this phenomenon in the experience of Jesus unless behind that experience was a reality, a Will really and actively ever in line with the Will of God?

F. His Moral Authority

Jesus was conscious of far more than power to rise constantly to His own ideal. He was conscious of absolute authority to call men to rise to the same ideal, conscious of a peculiar and unexampled authority over the lives and consciences of men. He makes Himself, even more than His words, the standard to which men must rise: He asks for a personal obedience of the most absolute kind: He never argues the justice of His claims, but presupposes their rightfulness in every word and act of His; He supersedes the most sacred moral law known to His hearers, and sanctions each new command by a simple, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you": He quietly states that men's destiny in the next world will be fixed by whether He denies or confesses them (Matt. x. 32); He proclaims that

He will be final judge of all the world (Luke ix. 26).

But Jesus was conscious of a prerogative yet more unique than that of being in Himself the perfect standard by which all men might be judged. When men are judged by Him, and their sin and short-coming is made manifest in the light of His purity and love, He claims the power to forgive their sin, to impart peace of conscience to them, and to overcome sin *in* them.

> " Jesus intended to do more than make the best ideal clear for men, and more than live it out before them. As the Messiah, He claimed, not merely to set men a task, but to give them God's perfect gift. He was confident that He could so influence men that they would be able for a life of power. The Jesus who thinks thus of Himself and who looks on humanity with such a confidence in His power to redeem them from the terrible misery in which He sees everyone round Him, stands as a fact before us, a fact that has no equal." [1]

Again and again in some of the most authentic episodes of His recorded life, at the healing of the paralytic, to the woman in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, and to the dying thief, Christ forgave sin with a quiet confidence. He not only reveals sin : He is its conqueror, He banishes it, He treads it under foot. " He was habitually conscious that

[1] Herrmann, " The Communion of the Christian with God," p. 92.

in His person Divine Power had entered the world for the accomplishment of all that can be called salvation."

Whence came this consciousness, this unique experience? Did He suggest it to Himself from the race experience of His people, from the consciousness of their prophets and saints? No prophet had invited men to confess His name: no prophet had declared that the relation of men to himself would fix their destiny in the future kingdom; no prophet had dared to say, "All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father." For these great men it had been enough to announce, "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus, however, "knows no more sacred task than to point to His own person."

Did He suggest this experience of authority to Himself from the expectations and hints and thoughts of those in His environment? It does not seem possible: His quiet assumption of lordship never failed to cause them amazement, "He speaketh with authority," "He commandeth even the evil spirits"—"Whence hath this man this wisdom?" His claim to forgive sins did more than amaze them; it shocked them to the point of charging Him with blasphemy, so far was it from summing up their highest consciousness—"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

There is no evidence whatever that Christ's earthly life brought Him into contact with the philosophers of other nations or that He sought inspiration of any kind beyond the bounds of His own people and the Scriptures, but if He had, where could He have found any germ of thought which could develop into the conception of one with absolute authority and the power to forgive sins. If He had known the teachings of the two men who of all others besides Himself "surprise us with originality of moral strength," Buddha and Socrates, their history and their teaching could never have influenced Him to such claims. Buddha, when dying, tells his disciples that they may forget him, but must follow his teaching and walk along the path he has shown them: Socrates hid himself behind the teaching for which he lived and died. Neither of them proclaimed their persons as the supreme standard by which men stand or fall, still less did they claim to forgive sins, or to overcome sin. Jesus derived this experience neither from the heroes and saints of His own nation nor of any other. It was not suggested to Him by His environment: He Himself tells us whence it came, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father."

G. His Consciousness of Unique Relation to God

But the experience of Jesus Christ that He was always able to fulfil His own moral ideal, His experience of absolute power to forgive man's sin and to overcome man's sin, His consciousness of Himself as standing towards men in the unique relation of Perfect Example, Lord and Saviour, would be inexplicable psychologically unless it were rooted in a yet more fundamental part of His experience, namely, His consciousness of a peculiar relation to God. The deepest and most fundamental element in the experience of Jesus is His consciousness of sonship. "When we get back to the head-waters of our religion, we come ultimately to the Person who felt, and in childlike simplicity said, 'No man knows the Father save the Son,' and 'I and the Father are one.'" [1]

For the mind of Jesus this peculiar sonship is the supreme reality. It was His consciousness of unity of will with the Father which lay behind His consciousness of sinlessness: it was His experience of absolute harmony of thought and purpose with God that gave Him confidence to forgive sin and to encourage men to believe that

[1] "Studies in Mystical Religion," Rufus M. Jones, p. 4.

He could overcome it; it was because He knew Himself one with God that He was calm in face of all danger and opposition, and unwaveringly confident in face of disaster, failure, and death, that His cause must triumph.

This consciousness of sonship is in the Synoptics not so much explicit as implicit in everything that Jesus does; assume that He was without such consciousness, and much that He does becomes psychologically inexplicable; His assumption of the right to abolish the old law and to proclaim a new; His claim to judge all men and to give them every manner of gift; His acceptance of their prayer and worship.

Assume that He did not have the experience of unshared sonship, and the very unconscious turns of His speech become a psychological riddle. Why, with all His brotherly love for us, does He never address even the apostles as "My brethren": why does He never speak of "Our Father," but always of, "My Father," a deliberate and selected phrase which sets His personal relationship to the Father in a distinct place by itself: why does He call God "the Lord of heaven and earth," but never "My Lord"? Why, again, does He never protest against the idolising love of His disciples, or warn them of the danger of attaching too much importance to His person?

But His experience of a peculiar relationship of sonship is explicit as well as implicit. Not only is His supreme conception of His own person, as summed up in the word "Son," reflected in a thousand mirrors in that view of His life and teaching given us in the Fourth Gospel, but in the Synoptic Gospels too, he speaks out of the depth of His experience with uncompromising clearness. His consciousness of unique sonship was present even in His early boyhood (Luke ii. 40-52); it comes out in the parables of the vineyard and the marriage feast, in His conversation with Peter about the taxing of kings' sons, and with the scribes about David's Son and David's Lord. But the supreme expression of the filial consciousness of Jesus is in the great words of Matt. xi. 27, "All things are delivered to ME of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."

Of the self-consciousness of Jesus as revealed in this passage, Denney says :—

> "1. In the work of making Himself known to men, the Father has no organ but Jesus, and in Jesus He has an adequate organ. . . . Two things are clear. One is that Jesus strongly asserts here, as He is often represented as doing in the Fourth Gospel, His subordination to the

Father. He has nothing that He has not received. His doctrine is not His own, but His that sent Him. The other is that there is no limit to what He has received. The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. (John v. 20.)

"2. The second point is the correlation of the Father and the Son. Both the words are used absolutely: as there is only one person who can be called the Father, so there is only one who can be called the Son. . . . What stands on the very surface here is the mutual, perfect, and exclusive knowledge of the Father and the Son.

"3. Jesus declares explicitly that He alone knows God as Father, and that for that knowledge, on which blessedness depends, all men must become debtors to Him. It is through Him alone, and in accordance with His gracious and sovereign will that the Father is revealed and that men can be enlightened and saved. . . . The sentence as a whole tells us plainly that Jesus is both to God and to man what no other can be. He is the Son who alone knows the Father . . . and He is the Mediator through whom alone the knowledge of the Father comes to men." [1]

It is true that Jesus Christ calls all of us to share the life of sonship—it is more than true, it is the most glorious reality of Christian experience that to us He has given the right to become the children of God. "Christianity is, at its very heart,

[1] "Jesus and the Gospel," James Denney, pp. 268, 272.

a religion which lives and flourishes because its members experience what its Founder experienced, the actual presence of God as the formative Spirit of a new creation." But "all others become children of God by way of debt to Jesus: in His case alone, sonship is the constitutive factor of His being." [1]

Whence came this consciousness: what caused Jesus of Nazareth to suggest this experience to Himself? Was it His reading of the past? Pagan thought supplies no parallel, "The Hellenic conception of Divine Fatherhood . . . starts not from ethical but from cosmic presuppositions. Its ethnic ideas leant with more or less decision to a naturalistic pantheism. Nor is any real equivalent to be found in the religion of the Old Testament. Judaism had long stood in peril of the petrifying rigidities of deism. Jesus' incommunicable consciousness of filial oneness with the Eternal is a new thing in the world." [2]

Was Jesus' autosuggestion the result of the expectations of those around Him? Many were looking for a Messiah, though scarcely for such a Messiah as He became: none were looking for one to come into their midst whose consciousness

[1] Mackintosh, "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ," p. 28.

[2] Mackintosh, "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ," p. 26.

of a unique relation to God was the fundamental fact of His life. His filial consciousness was indeed an obstacle to the chance of His acceptance by His people as the Messiah; it ran contrary to their inbred monotheistic instincts, the idea that He was uttering blasphemy was a stumbling block to those drawing near Him, and was that which finally brought Him into collision with the nation's leaders. Whence did he draw this notion so cross-grained from the point of view of His own people?

Was Jesus' filial consciousness the result of longing after such a relationship with God in the hearts of the best men around Him, suggested by them and bearing fruit at last in His pure and upright soul? We might think so, were it not for the difference of type which appears so clearly between the filial consciousness of Christ, and that of any other before or since who has yearned for intimate communion with God. The essential factor in the experience of communion with God of all others than Himself is yearning, reaching out, partial attainment only creating a deeper yearning —"My soul panteth: my soul thirsteth: when shall I come to appear before God?" The essential factor in the filial consciousness of Jesus is its changelessness, the absence of any striving or yearning after it; its presence from the beginning to the end of His life.

The Unexplained Residue in the Experience of Jesus

We have studied, only too superficially, certain elements in the religious experience and consciousness of Jesus Christ Himself. Are they satisfactorily accounted for by the theory of autosuggestion and kindred suggestions? Let us review the ground:—

(a) *The intellectual difficulty.*

The theory that the experience of Christ was the result of hysteria makes shipwreck on the sanity of His experience and the balance of His character. The expectations of His people in His own day concerning the Messiah show no trace whatever of ideas which could have influenced Him to autosuggest the idea of sinlessness or power to forgive sin or unique sonship. Even the normal social influences of His time, *e.g.* the current religious teaching of the schools, could not have induced these ideas—much less could they have sprung from the action of the psychology of the crowd. When we turn to seek the sources of His experience in the history of His own people, greatly as that, without question, influenced His development, there are elements in His consciousness where He seems not merely to transcend, but to make an absolutely new departure from their race con-

sciousness, elements, the germs of which are found neither in environment nor in predominant social influences, nor the history and scriptures of His own people. If we look for possible sources in the religious ideas or philosophy of other nations, the startling independence of His religious experience seems far more manifest than in contrast with Judaism. Nothing is more remarkable in the experience of Jesus than His extraordinary spiritual independence, except at the point where He declared Himself dependent. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing. . . . I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge."

Is it not fair to say that there appears to be an "unexplained residue" in the religious experience of Jesus, which the autosuggestion theory is unable to account for, even when the utmost possible allowance has been made for the influences of tradition, history, training, and teaching in the formation of His religious experience?

Does not the autosuggestion theory collapse before the intellectual problem presented by this unexplained residue?

(b) *The moral problems involved.*

But a mere intellectual problem can be faced with philosophic calm. There are moral problems

connected with the attempt to explain the religious experience of Jesus as autosuggestion which are of a far graver import.

(i) In the relation of the religious experience of Jesus to the religious experience of Christians.

In our study of the phenomena of Christian experience we have seen it to be a dynamic of incomparable power both in the life of the individual, and in the life of society. We have seen again that the ultimate source of all Christian experience is the religious experience of Christ Himself. His religious experience then presents us with a double problem—not merely the task of explaining its source, as we endeavour to follow the autosuggestion theory consistently—but also the task of explaining why His religious experience acts across the ages with ever-increasing influence. In the words, put into the mouth of Napoleon :—

> " Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne and I have founded great empires, but upon what did these creations of our genius depend ? Upon force ! Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . I have inspired multitudes with such devotion that they would die for me . . . but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present, with the electric influences of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them I lighted up the flames of self-devotion in their hearts. . . . Christ alone has succeeded

in so raising the mind of man towards the unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is, above all others, difficult to satisfy. He asks for that which a philosopher may often seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally, and forthwith His demand is granted—wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man with all its powers becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish the sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range."

And voices, ten thousand times ten thousand, confirm this verdict, for the history of the Christian Church is the history of lives changed by contact with that picture of the experience of Jesus Christ which is given us in the Gospels. And many a voice outside the Church has made the same acknowledgment. "The brief record of those three short years," says Lecky, "has done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists."

And so we are brought back again to the dilemma

to which the autosuggestionist theory leads us. The moral dynamic of the world *is* the religious experience of Jesus Christ Himself—and that experience has no adequate rational basis; there is no objective reality which corresponds to it. The moral dynamic of the world is a mere auto-suggestion, and we are reduced to acknowledging the miraculous power of the irrational.

But that is not all. The sharpness of the difficulty is increased a hundred-fold when we realise what part of the religious experience of Jesus it is which possesses this peculiar dynamic power in the lives of His followers. Men have endeavoured in the interests of many a non-supernatural interpretation of Jesus Christ to show that men's lives become charged with moral force when they study His ethical teaching, realise the beauty of His law of love, and see how perfectly that law bore fruit in His own life, in deeds and words of love and perfect purity: and the origin of the law of love and the perfect moral example of its Author seem to many easily explainable on natural grounds. Whether they can be so explained may well be questioned, but it matters not, for the peculiar dynamic force of Jesus Christ lies neither in the beauty of His moral teaching nor His perfect life.

Not that these are without their force—they

astound, they attract; they draw men in the first instance to seek to understand Jesus: but they do not bestow power. Power comes to men through Jesus Christ only when they are personally touched by the stronger elements of His consciousness, His moral authority, His claim to deal with sin, His sense of unique relation to God. It is precisely these experiences of Jesus which have dynamic moral force in the lives of men.

A man may recognise the beauty and truth of Jesus' life and teaching, and may be filled with admiration; but his feeling for their truth remains largely sentiment, till another side of the picture of Jesus begins to take hold of him. He begins to perceive that the Man, whose life and teaching are so marvellous, is speaking to him with the voice of absolute moral authority, asking his obedience, his absolute obedience and devotion. He may shrink, he may resist—fear and resistance are often the first effect of the vision of the authority of Jesus—but unless he turns away, his conscience will soon proclaim the absolute right of this Man to command and rule. Admitting the right of Jesus to direct his moral life and his relations to other men, he bends his endeavour to obey His precepts and follow His example. But the teaching and example of Jesus, even when backed

by a recognition of his authority, do not yet lead him to a life of power. Christ regarded only as a law, albeit the best and highest possible, brings men, not to power, but to discouragement and despair, as the experience of many a one who has faithfully tried to keep His precepts bears witness. Equally discouraging is the attempt to follow Jesus Christ as one who lays down a scheme of social reform, albeit His teachings be at the root of all reform. Men are saved from despair only as there dawns on them another of the mighty claims of Jesus, when they see Him forgiving and overcoming sin, and when they realise that "along with the call to obedience goes the power to obey. Life's moral resources are in Him." He is "Saviour," and through Him we have power to be what by nature we cannot be, and to do what by nature we cannot do.

Christ known only as ethical teacher, Christ known only as social reformer, works miracles, but they are miracles of discouragement: Christ known in His own inner life as absolute Master, as Saviour and the only Son of the Father, has and bestows all power in heaven and earth. Herrmann was right when he said:—

> "The one thing which the Gospels will give us as an overpowering reality which allows no doubt . . . is the inner life of Jesus itself;

> . . . under the impress of that inner life that breaks through all the veils of the story we ask no more questions as to the trustworthiness of the Evangelists. . . . The total picture of Jesus' inner life . . . compels us to simple reverence." It is "the free revelation of the living to the living." [1]

This inner life of Jesus then, our moral dynamic and inspiration, is it mere autosuggestion; has it no adequate rational basis; has it no objective reality behind it? The moral shock involved if we must answer "yes" may well appal us.

(ii) In the relation of the religious experience of Jesus to our own personal experience.

Implied in the autosuggestion theory is another conclusion from which the moral sense of most men who are zealous for truth and righteousness will make them shrink.

All our knowledge of the religious experience of Jesus is drawn from that picture of Him we have in the Gospels—there it is that we get that impression of His inner life, which works on us with such compelling power. The autosuggestion theory drives us to one of two theories as to the origin of that picture. On the one hand it is asserted that the religious experience of Jesus is *not* as depicted, but was the result of the auto-

[1] Hermann, "The Communion of the Christian with God." Williams & Norgate. P. 75.

suggestion of those of His followers who produced the picture. To take up this position is to exalt ourselves above Jesus, and to maintain that men like ourselves produced the portrait of the inner life of Jesus out of their own spiritual resources. An examination of every other attempt to depict a character, both perfectly ideal and perfectly human, reveals such failure as makes the superiority of the spiritual resources of unlearned men over those of the greatest imaginative writers seem in itself a miracle. If Jesus Himself did not so speak and act as to reveal the consciousness we see depicted in the Gospels, what nameless genius, what unknown master of human psychology produced this marvellously effective picture ?

On the other hand, the picture of Jesus' inner life given us in the Gospels may be a true one ; the disciples, faithful witnesses in all main particulars. The autosuggestion theory *then* compels us to believe that there is that in man which can, without the intervention of any superhuman factor produce such a life as the life of the Man Christ Jesus, that His religious experience in all its details is just the fruit of powers which are in the human race and which, *ipso facto*, are in ourselves. Fresh from some elaborate study of the development of the religious experience of

man, from the days of fetish worship to the highest religious development the human race has touched, we are ready enough to adopt the autosuggestion theory of the origin of all religious experience. But translate the theory into the language of everyday life, and say, "Such a one as I may live the inner life of Jesus," and we are given pause, we are so at least, if we have ever drawn near enough to Jesus to experience the utter self-abasement and humiliation which comes when we measure ourselves against Him.

Contact with the inner life of Jesus destroys in us our self-contentment and breaks down our self-conceit. The autosuggestion theory proclaims the mightiest of all moral achievements possible for us. Which is the utterance of my truest self—"I cannot" as I see Jesus, "I can" as I work out the moral implications of the auto-suggestion theory?

Conclusion

When the doctrines of evolution were first announced, panic or uncertainty seized many Christians: the enemies of Christianity proclaimed that the origin of the material world had been discovered and that the creative power of God was eliminated as an explanation of the universe. Maturer study and thought showed

not that the *origin* of the material world had been discovered, but that the *process* of the development of the world, as we know it, had been brought to light.

The scientific and religious world to-day supplies a parallel. The publication of the results of modern psychological research has produced another epidemic of uncertainty amongst Christians: it is widely asserted that the phenomena of suggestion and autosuggestion explain the origin of Christian experience. Maturer study shows that it is the *process* by which Christian experience is produced on which psychological research has thrown light, not on its origin, or source.

In this treatise, we have freely admitted the large part played by suggestion, autosuggestion, and the psychology of the crowd in the development of Christian experience, but we maintain that these factors are not in themselves the source of Christian experience, nor do they explain its origin.

In maintaining this thesis, we have studied some of the characteristic features and results of Christian experience: we have also tried to set forth some of the peculiar elements in the religious consciousness of Jesus Christ, the one ultimate source of the religious consciousness of His followers. Are we not justified in asserting that,

when all allowance has been made for the part played by the various phenomena of suggestion in producing these experiences, there remains in the experience both of our Master and of the Christian an " unexplained residue " of tremendous extent and import.

Face to face with this " unexplained residue," it remains for each one of us to decide his course. Will he, by a supreme act of faith in the psychologist of the future, cling to the hope that psychology, in defiance of the acknowledged limitations of its sphere, will arrive at explaining the residue in question? Or will he admit the Christian explanation, namely, a superhuman factor?

Which is the more probable, which is the theory most consonant with our demand for a reasonable universe—the supposition that in man himself there is such a peculiar richness and power as can produce the best fruits of Christian experience, or, that another factor is present, God Himself at work in the human soul energising and transforming it?

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